

GHULAM JABBAR'S RENUNCIATION

A TALE OF EASTERN BENGAL

BY

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Ghulam Jabbar's Renunciation

CHAPTER I

THE MISSIONARY'S LETTER

'I DON'T know what to think; the missionary assured us again and again in his preaching that, in the noble Qur'án, we Muslims are told to ask the advice of Jews and Christians if we are in doubt; but how can that possibly be? Was not Muḥammad the last and greatest Prophet? and does not the noble Qur'án contain the final and complete revelation of God? We know that it does. How then can it possibly command us to ask advice of a people who mistakenly follow a corrupted and abrogated Scripture, and worship the Prophet Jesus as God!' The speaker was Ghulam Jabbár, a tall and handsome Bengali youth of eighteen years, who had just returned to his village home in Islámabád for his holidays after six months of hard study in the Government school of Dhánpur in East Bengal. Ghulam was the only son of Ismá'il Jabbár, a wealthy Muslim landowner of Islámabád, a man who lavished all the affection of an intense nature on his son, and had planned for him a liberal education and a subsequent entry into

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the Civil Service of India. Nor were his hopes misplaced, for Ghulám was a bright, intelligent lad, who had easily stood first in the village school, and was now, in his new surroundings at Dhánpur, throwing himself with all the enthusiasm of youth into his preparation for Matriculation a year hence.

It had been a hot and trying day, and now, as the sun went down in a misty haze which betokened still greater heat on the morrow, Ghulám was sitting with his great friend, Emárat Husain, on the bank of the river which flowed past the large village where they had both been born, and was giving him an animated account of the new experiences which had been his in the important town of Dhánpur. The conversation had drifted from the school and its studies to religion, and Ghulám was describing the preaching of the Christian missionary in the streets of Dhánpur. The lads were, both of them, deeply religious, and they had often read together, in the days when they attended the village school at Islámabád, the *Lives of the Prophets* and other popular Muslim books, and it had been a great grief to them both when the time came for Ghulám to go to Dhánpur for the further prosecution of his studies. Emárat's father was far from rich, and his son had early been called from the school to help him in his business as a rice-merchant. The lads, however, had often corresponded, and the old-time confidence and affection was in no way lessened by the passage of time; so nothing was more natural on this autumn evening than that Ghulám should confide to his friend the new thoughts and questionings which were surging through his mind.

THE MISSIONARY'S LETTER

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'Yes', he continued, 'the missionary read from a Bengali translation of the noble Qur'án, and though I forget in what chapter he said the words were to be found, I remember well the words themselves, which were these, "Ask those who are acquainted with the Scripture, if ye know not". And, then, at the close of his preaching, he invited his hearers to go to his house and ask any question concerning religion. There was much that I did not understand in what he said, and some things that I certainly could not accept, and I longed to show him the falsity of his beliefs, and to tell him of our Prophet Muḥammad; but I did not go near him for some days, for I was a stranger, and I thought that an introduction was necessary for such an interview. I had heard, too, only a few days before, how Tomij Siddiq had been driven away like a dog by the liveried servants of the magistrate when he one day tried to see that official. But one day as I was taking my evening walk, I saw, to my surprise, that the missionary was playing cricket with a number of students, and, when I asked about him, I was told that these missionaries are not like the officials—though I used to think they were—and that no letter of introduction was necessary in order to secure an interview with them; in fact, my informant told me, Mr. Williams, for that was the missionary's name, was always most glad to receive visitors and to discuss religious matters with them. One day, therefore, when the sun had gone down, and there was none to notice me, I hastily stepped up to his door, and asked to see him. He had just returned, so he told me, from preaching in a market some miles away, but he welcomed me most graciously, and at once ushered

me into his study, a large room in which were more books than I had ever seen before in a private house. To my surprise he did not begin to talk about religion at all, but asked me about my home and my studies, and it was only when I ventured to remark that I had heard him preach in the streets of Dhánpur that he began to speak of the matter that had brought me to him. I had heard that these missionaries generally abused other religions, and I was prepared to defend the holy religion of Islám to the best of my power; in fact, I had armed myself beforehand with a number of historical facts relating to the wonderful spread of our holy faith which I could quote to him; but, to my surprise, he did not attempt to criticize Islám at all; on the contrary he asked me whether I had studied the noble Qur'án; and when I confessed that I had not, owing to my ignorance of the Arabic language, he expressed both surprise and sorrow, and strongly advised me to procure a translation of that book in order to become acquainted with its teachings. I was so surprised at this that all the arguments which I had prepared vanished from my mind; for I had not expected this kind of advice from a Christian missionary. So I listened in silence until he went on to speak of the Injíl, and of the praise which the Prophet of God had bestowed upon that Book. Of course, I replied at once that the Injíl was both corrupted by the Christians, and abrogated by the noble Qur'án, so that its study was no longer incumbent upon us Muslims; but, instead of arguing with me, he again quoted the passage I had heard in his street preaching about the duty of Muslims, when in doubt concerning any matter, to "ask the people of the Book" who, he

said, were Jews and Christians. After more conversation of a like nature I came away, but I cannot get rid of these words "ask the people of the Book;" for, if such a command really stands in our holy Qur'án, then it seems clear that the Taurát and Injíl are neither corrupted nor abrogated, and so, dear friend, I have told you all my heart in order that I may hear what you have to say to this strange teaching of our holy Book—if indeed, such teaching be really found there!

For a moment there was silence, and then Emárat replied in a voice that shook with passion, 'Ghulám you are a fool! I thought you were too old a bird to be caught with such chaff. Of course, the words you have quoted are only the creation of your missionary's own fancy. I do not believe for a moment they are to be found in the noble Qur'án. Why did you not challenge him to produce them? and then you would have learned what deceivers these Christian missionaries are. Why! if our holy Qur'án really taught that, then the conclusion is clear that it is our duty, as Muslims, to listen to the teaching of these foreigners; but that can never be, for we know that Islám is the last and perfect religion, and the Qur'án the final and complete revelation of God, and, as such, is a sufficient guide for all Muslims,' and, so saying, Emárat, by way of emphasis, hurled a clod of earth into the swiftly flowing waters of the river before him.

'Yes! I was foolish' returned Ghulám, 'not to have demanded to be shown the passage; and, yet, I cannot think that that man wilfully deceived me. His face was too open and his tones too earnest and sincere for that. The most that I can believe of him is that he may be

mistaken. At any rate I have a proposal to make, and that is that we go to maulavī Ibrāhīm 'Alī, and ask him whether there is really any such passage in the noble Qur'ān. He is, as you know, the leading maulavī of these parts, and a staunch defender of Islām.'

Nothing loth to throw the responsibility of a decision upon other shoulders, Emārat readily acquiesced in his friend's proposal, and the two soon after rose and made their way to the house of the village priest. The maulavī received them with pleasure not unmingled with respect, for he remembered that one of his visitors was the only son of his patron, the rich Muḥammadan landowner of Islāmabād, and, after uttering a few gracious words of welcome, he requested to know the object of their visit. Neither was eager to be the first to disclose the matter which had brought them thither, for they knew the maulavī well enough to fear his displeasure at their listening at all to the words of a Christian missionary, but finally Ghulām summoned up courage, and, in simple, straightforward language, told his story.

The maulavī was angry: his countenance betrayed the fact, and yet he dared not openly reprehend the one who, before long, would inherit his father's estates and his father's power; and, so, with a forced smile, and a contemptuous wave of the hand, he thus made reply, 'By my life! these missionaries are always trying to overturn the faith of the unwary, and by their evil speech and false address seeking to blind the eyes of the faithful. They take a verse of the noble Qur'ān, and, without trying to understand its meaning, twist it to suit their own ends, and to misrepresent the teaching of our

holy religion. Yes! the passage you mention is in the noble Qur'ān, of that there is no doubt', and so saying, the maulavī opened his leather-bound copy at Sūratu'l-Anbiyā' (xxi) and read:—

فَسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

'The missionary's translation, too,' he added, 'is not a bad one, for, literally, the passage means "Ask the people of the Dhikr, if you do not know." But it is in his interpretation of the verse that the Christian priest has lied. He says it means that the people addressed, are told to ask the Jews and Christians when they do not know the meaning of certain things, whereas the true interpretation of the words أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ is the Muslim

priests, who are entrusted with the Qur'ān, the Book of God. This is clear; and when the verse was first sent down, it, of course, primarily applied to our Prophet Muḥammad, on whom be the peace and blessing of God. To him, first of all, the people were to apply for a solution of all their doubts, and, after his death, the verse was, and is still, taken to apply to all Muslim priests. The explanation which would make the words "People of the Dhikr" apply to Jews and Christians is too absurd to be entertained for a moment, and only serves to show the crass ignorance and narrow prejudice of these Christian missionaries,' and, so saying, the maulavī closed the book, and sat with a look of contemptuous disdain overspreading his features.

Greatly relieved, the two friends, with profuse thanks to the maulavī, rose and took their departure, and wended their way to the home of Ghulām, where, in the elegantly

furnished room which he called his own, they went over again the comforting words of the maulaví, and congratulated themselves on the happy proposal which had led them to seek his aid in their time of difficulty. It was now that Emárat's combative nature asserted itself, and he soon proposed a letter to the missionary, setting forth the true interpretation of the verse which had caused them such perturbation. Nor was Ghulám slow to acquiesce, and soon the two friends were busy drafting a letter in the name of Ghulám in which the maulaví's words were quoted, and which concluded by inviting the missionary to embrace the holy religion of Islám, in which alone, he was assured, was salvation to be found; and then, as it was now late, the two friends bade each other good night, and Emárat departed for his home at the other end of the village.

But Ghulám could not sleep. Can it be, he repeated to himself again and again, that the missionary is a deceiver after all? I cannot believe it, His whole attitude, and the very tones of his voice spoke of sincerity and deep religious faith. And, yet, why should he speak with such assurance of what he did not understand? He told me, too, that he knew Arabic, so that he could hardly have been mistaken. Soliloquizing thus, Ghulám at last fell into a troubled sleep, and rose, the next morning restless and anxious. The day passed slowly away and the afternoon of the next day found the two friends impatiently waiting the arrival of the usual mail from Dhánpur. What will the missionary reply? was the thought uppermost in their minds; and when, at length, a letter came with the name of Ghulám written in a bold, clear hand on the envelope, the two friends

hastened away to a quiet spot on the banks of the river, and, tearing open the missive devoured its contents. And this is what they read:—

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,

It gave me great pleasure to receive your letter of yesterday's date, and to learn that you are seeking to know the truth concerning the teaching of the Qur'án; for I am persuaded that an unprejudiced reading of that book will inevitably lead you to study those other Scriptures of the Christians which it so often mentions as the 'word of God', and uniformly commends as 'a light and guidance for men.' I commend your decision to seek the advice of one of your religious teachers, and I specially thank you for giving me the opportunity of replying to his comments on the passage which I quoted. Let me say, at the outset, that I do not care to enter into any religious discussion with your friend simply for the sake of argument; for I have seen a great deal of such wrangling, and I know how unprofitable, and even harmful, it may be. But since the maulaví has given a flat denial to one of the plainest teachings of the Qur'án, and in doing so has not scrupled to stigmatize me as a 'deceiver', I must ask to be permitted to return to the subject. Maulaví Ibráhím practically accepts my translation of the passage, so the question resolves itself into one of interpretation. He affirms that the term 'People of the Dhikr' primarily meant Muḥammad, and that, after his decease, it applied to all Muslim teachers of the Qur'án, and that, therefore, the passage means no more than that Muslims who are in doubt on religious matters are to seek the advice of their religious teachers—a rather superfluous piece of advice surely. It will not be difficult, however, for me to show that your friend is grievously in error in imagining that the term 'People of the Dhikr' here means Muslims. It

means Jews and Christians, and was, further, applied, in the time of Muḥammad, to a sect known as the Ṣābiāns, and this I will now proceed to prove by showing that the term as used in many other parts of the Qur'ān is applied to Jews and Christians, and that the best Muslim commentators of the Qur'ān have acknowledged that such is the proper signification of the term, and, secondly I shall show that as Muḥammad himself was commanded in the Qur'ān to 'ask the People of the Book' for a solution of his doubts, the words, manifestly cannot apply to him, or, indeed, to any Muslim.

Now let us turn, in the first place, to the passage which I quoted, and ask what Muslim commentators of reputed standing and authority have to say regarding the term. But, first of all, I would remark that the words translated 'People of the Book' are, in the original 'People of the Dhikr'. The word 'Dhikr' is generally used in the Qur'ān to express the idea of an 'admonition' or an 'exposition' of religion.' As such the Qur'ān is sometimes called a *Dhikr* it is true, but the context always makes it clear when that book is referred to, and when the preceding Scriptures of the Jews and Christians are meant. In the passages, for example, in which the people, and even Muḥammad himself, are told to ask the people of the *Dhikr*, the context shows that the word certainly refers to the Scriptures of the Jews and Christians; and this the leading Muslim commentators of the Qur'ān candidly admit. Take the passage to which I referred in *Sūratu'n-Nahl* (xvi). The very context of the verse makes the meaning clear.

It reads thus:—

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ إِلَّا رَجَالًا نُوحِي إِلَيْهِمْ فَسَلُّوا أَهْلَ
الذِّكْرِ لِنَعْلَمَ مَا تَعْلَمُونَ

'And we have not sent before thee (oh Muḥammad) any but men whom we inspired, therefore ask ye the people of the *Dhikr*, if ye do not know.' In this passage the former prophets of the Jews and Christians are clearly referred to, and the people addressed are told to ask the people of those former Scriptures for a settlement of their doubts.

This is so clear that the Muḥammadan commentators of the Qur'ān are unanimous upon the point. Thus, in his comment on this passage 'Abbās, one of the most famous of the exegetes of the Qur'ān, plainly says that the term means *اهل التوراة والانجيل* 'the people of the Taurāt and Injīl.' In the *Tafsīru'l-Jalālāin* it is said that the word means *العلماء بالتوراة والانجيل* that is, 'the learned men of the Taurāt and Injīl.' Again in the *Khulāṣatu't-Tafāsīr* (vol. ii, p. 543) the term is explained thus:—

تم علم والوں سے پوچھو اگر خود نہیں جانتے یعنی یہود و نصاریٰ سے جنکے پاس کتب آسمانی موجود ہیں

'Ask the learned men, if you do not know, that is, ask the Jews and Christians with whom the heavenly books are found.'

Finally, though I could easily quote many more authorities to the same effect, in the *Madd'ih'il-Qur'ān* the word is said to mean *یہود و نصاریٰ کے عالموں*

'The learned men of the Jews and Christians' so, my young friend, you must acknowledge that the maulavī, in his attempt to avoid a difficulty, has contradicted the learned commentators of the Qur'ān whose words I have quoted.

If you turn to the comments of those authorities on the passage quoted by Ibrāhīm maulavī from *Sūratu'l-Anbiyā'* (xxi) you will find the same thing. It will be well, therefore, before we pass to the passage where

Muhammad himself is definitely commanded to seek light and guidance from the Jews and Christians, to examine the commentaries on the verse quoted by him. The great commentator Imám Baidáwí says on page 426 of his *Tafsír* that the words were:—

جواب لقولهم هل هذا الا بشر مثلكم يا امر بهم ان يسئلوا
اهل الكتاب عن حال الرسل المتقدمة

'A reply to their words: Is this man aught but a mortal like yourselves. He (God) commands them that they should ask the people of the Book concerning the true character of the ancient prophets.' 'Abbás, in his comment on the passage, says the words 'People of the *Dhikr*' mean اهل التوراة والانجيل 'The people of the Taurát and Injíl', and in the *Tafsíru'l-Jalálain*, it is explained by العلماء بالتوراة والانجيل 'Those learned in the Taurát and Injíl'. Thus I have shown that the command to 'ask the People of the Book' (or *Dhikr*) means, 'ask the People of the Taurát and Injíl'.

Let us now turn to Súratu Yúnas (x) verse 94; there we read:—

فَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي شَكٍّ مِمَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ فَسْئَلِ الَّذِينَ يَقْرَءُونَ
الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ

'And if thou art in doubt, (O Muhammad) of that which we have sent down unto thee, ask those who read the Book before thee'. Here, again, the commentators are unanimous in explaining the words 'those who read the Book' as referring to Jews and Christians. The verse before us has only one meaning, which is clearly contained in the words themselves. In it Muhammad is commanded to refer to the Jews

and Christians for the settlement of his doubts. It is not surprising, then, that ordinary Muslims should be told to do the same. That this is the true meaning of the verse is candidly acknowledged by 'Abbás, Jalálain and others. Thus, for example, in the *Tafsíru'l-Jalálain* we read:—

فان كننا يا محمد في شك مما انزلنا اليك من القصص
فرضا فسئل الذين يقرءون الكتب التوراة من قبلك فانه
ثابت عندهم يخبرونك بصدقه

'If thou art in doubt, O Muhammad, concerning that which we have sent down to thee of the stories and commands, ask those who are reading the book of the Taurát before thee; for verily it is confirmed with them, and they will inform thee concerning its truth.' 'Abbás comments thus on the same verse:—

فان كننا يا محمد في شك مما انزلنا اليك مما انزلنا
جبرئيل به يعني القرآن فسئل الذين يقرءون الكتاب يعني
التوراة من قبلك

'If thou art in doubt, O Muhammad, concerning that which we have sent down upon thee; of that which we have sent down by Gabriel, namely, the Qur'án, then ask those who are reading the book of the Taurát before thee.'

Baidáwí says:—

قيل الخطاب للنبي صلى الله عليه وسلم والمراد به
امته او كل من يسمع اي ان كننا ايها السامع في
شك مما انزلنا علي لسان نبيك

'It is said that the person addressed is the Prophet of God, on him be the peace and blessing of God, and

that it refers to his followers or to every one who hears. That is, if thou art in doubt, oh hearer, concerning that which we have sent down on the tongue of thy Prophet.'

The great scholar Imám Fakhru'd-dín-Rází in his famous commentary called *al-Kabir* (vol. v, p. 29) concludes a long comment in these words, 'Lastly, if we suppose the Prophet himself to be here addressed in his own person as "thou" the explanation is that, being a man, he was, as such, liable to be troubled in his heart by doubts and anxious possibilities which could only be removed by clear declarations and manifest proofs, and God most high, therefore, made this revelation to dispel these misgivings. And after all, it is only stated as a possibility.'

Such are the explanations of the ancient commentators. Not a few of the moderns, whilst admitting that Muḥammad himself is addressed in the verse before us, strive to find a way out of an obvious difficulty by adding that, though Muḥammad is personally addressed, yet the meaning is that his followers are really meant! This explanation, however, has no basis in the words of the Qur'án, though it clearly shows the perplexity into which the words have thrown many Muslims. The fact is, both Muḥammad and his followers are, in various verses of the Qur'án, exhorted to ask advice and teaching from the people of the preceding Scriptures, the Jews and Christians. Therefore, dear friend, I again urge you to give heed to my words, and the words of your Qur'án. God has sent the Taurát and Injíl as a 'direction and a mercy'. Is it strange, then, that you should seek the counsel of those who have been made by God the custodians of those sacred volumes? Surely it is your highest wisdom to give heed to their words, and, above all, to study those holy Books in which God has revealed His will to men. Your own Qur'án

bears witness that they are نور و هدى للناس 'a light

and a guidance to mankind'; let them, then, be your guide through the perplexities and difficulties which face you, and you will find that they will lead you into a satisfaction and peace such as you have never known before.

Your sincere friend,

A. WILLIAMS.

When the two friends finished their perusal of the missionary's letter there was a moment of intense silence, broken at length by Ghulám, who, turning to his companion, said: 'I know now, Emárat, what I felt and believed before, namely, that the missionary is no deceiver. The proofs he offers are too strong to be doubted, and, to me at least, it is as clear as the day that, in seeking the advice and counsel of a Christian missionary, I am only obeying the command of the noble Qur'án. I cannot understand why this should be: I only know that it is so. Moreover I feel that I cannot stop here. If, as he asserts, the Qur'án speaks so highly of the Taurát and Injíl, and calls those books the "word of God," then it seems to me that it is my bounden duty to study them. At any rate I shall ask maulaví Ibráhím what he has to say to a Muslim reading the Christian Scriptures.'

For a moment Emárat made no reply. It was evident that a great battle was going on within him, and that love of and loyalty to his ancestral faith found themselves in violent opposition to a somewhat undefined, yet real, sense of duty to follow the truth so far as revealed to him. Of the truth of the missionary's words he had now no doubt, and he dimly realized that that truth might lead him to a final resting-place far removed from his present one. In spite of his business surroundings,

which were both uncongenial and strongly destructive of any real piety, Emárat had a deep religious nature, and his soul was strangely stirred by the concluding lines of the missionary's letter. His sense of duty was strong, and when once a path was made clear to him he seldom wavered in it. It was, therefore, with feelings of genuine relief that he hailed his friend's proposal to again interview the village priest on the subject of the Christian Scriptures. Surely this time he would be able to help them, and would speak words that would quiet the tumultuous feelings which were stirring the very depths of his soul. Surely he, the great champion of Islám, would be able to give an answer to the anxious questions which forced themselves unbidden upon his mind. Could it be, he asked himself, that the Christian Scriptures, which he had always been taught to regard as both corrupted and abrogated, were indeed commended in the Qur'án! Could it be that the missionaries were right in urging their study upon Muslims! It was with such thoughts as these that the young merchant hailed the proposal of his friend with cordial approval, and they soon found themselves once again at the house of the maulaví. The latter was sitting on the floor of his house, with his Qur'án on a low stool before him, and as he swayed his body from side to side was intoning the sonorous Arabic of the Qur'án in a musical kind of chant. The lads waited quietly until his recitation was ended, and then Ghulám, with a respectful salutation, addressed him :—

'We have come to you, maulaví Shāhib,' he said, 'to ask about the Taurát and Injíl. We cannot read the Arabic Qur'án, but we have been told that it contains

much praise of the Christian Scriptures, and that they are there described as the "word of God" and "a light and guidance for men." Now we have always been taught that the Bible, as the Christians call their Scriptures, is not only corrupted, but also abrogated, so that we Muslims are no longer required to read it; but, if that be so, then why does the Qur'án speak of it in terms of such high praise?'

The maulaví was silent for a moment, and then launched out into such a violent tirade against Christians, whom he described as infidels, that the lads began almost to wish that they had stayed away. 'The word of God did you say!' he cried in conclusion, 'yes! it may have been once, and indeed was so in the time of our holy Prophet, upon whom be the peace and blessing of God, and then it was that God spoke of it as a "light and guidance for men"; but these infidel Christians have corrupted it since then, and have not only added many things which are not true, such as the stories about a pretended death of the Prophet 'Isá on the cross, but they have also cut out of it many prophecies concerning our Prophet Muḥammad, on whom be the peace and blessing of God. No. It certainly is not right for good Muslims to read the Taurát and Injíl now. The words of the noble Qur'án, which seem to allow that, apply, at most, to the copies which were in existence in the time of the Prophet, upon whom be the peace and blessing of God, and not to the corrupt copies of those Scriptures which are now current. It is thus these Christian missionaries are leading astray so many Muslims, so that even some learned maulavís in the Panjáb have been deceived by them, and have become

Christians. Take my advice, and have nothing to do with them or their Book. The holy Qur'ān is sufficient for all good Muslims.'

The burning words of the maulavī, uttered with much feeling and declamation, made a great impression upon the two friends, who went away more puzzled than ever as to the course they ought to pursue, and twilight deepened into night as they sat together on the bank of the river discussing the new questions which had, with such dramatic suddenness, been brought before them. So long they had lived their quiet, uneventful village lives, taking for granted all that had been taught them of God and religion by the village priest, taking on trust every statement concerning the Qur'ān and their Prophet, that now, when suddenly brought face to face with another Scripture and another faith, not as the perversion of truth which they had always been taught to regard them, but as a great God-given book and religion, they were both perplexed and dismayed.

'Can it be', said Ghulām, as he grasped his friend by the hand, 'that we have been wandering in the dark, when God had sent the Taurāt to give us light? The maulavī shāhib said many hard things about the Christians, but I noticed that he did not deny the presence of these praises of the Taurāt and Injīl in the holy Qur'ān. The most that he said was that such verses applied to the copies of the Taurāt and Injīl which were current in the time of our Prophet, and not to the mutilated and untrustworthy copies which are current amongst the Christians to-day. But the missionary is a learned man. Can it be that he is ignorant of these things! It seems almost impossible to believe that he does not know that

the copies which were current in the time of our Prophet contained, as our maulavī has often taught us, many references to the coming of the "Seal of the Prophets," Muḥammad. And yet it is equally impossible for me to believe that, knowing these things, he should endanger his soul by still clinging to this corrupted Injīl, or should endeavour to teach others to believe in it. People do not do such things without a motive, and what possible motive could he have for wilfully leading men astray? It cannot be money, for I know that these missionaries are poor, and a Muslim, who has been to England, once assured me that they could easily earn much more money in business in their own country; and it cannot be love of ease, for these men seem to be always busy, and I have often seen them preaching in the public streets in the heat of our tropical climate which is so trying for these foreigners. I cannot understand it, and I intend, upon my return to school next week, to seek out this Christian priest, and tell him how mistaken he is in following a corrupted Injīl. Perhaps I shall be able to lead him to acknowledge our Prophet as the last great messenger of God,' and so saying, Ghulām rose, and taking leave of his friend, wended his way homewards.

CHAPTER II

A MOMENTOUS INTERVIEW

GHULAM had not been long back at school in Dhánpur before he sought out the missionary, and acquainted him with the result of his interview with maulaví Ibráhím. 'You see, sir,' he said 'the verse of the noble Qur'án which you quoted about our asking advice of the people of the Book—and I must admit now that it does refer to Christians—could only apply to the Jews and Christians of Muḥammad's time who were in possession of the uncorrupted Taurát and Injíl. It cannot possibly apply to the Christians to-day who follow a mutilated Gospel. The fact is, as our maulaví told us, the Christians, subsequent to the time of our Prophet, have cut out of the Injíl many prophecies relating to his mission, and have added many passages about the prophet 'Isá. Such being the case, it is inconceivable that Muslims should now be expected to ask the Christians concerning matters of religious faith and practice, or to study the Christian Scriptures. Similarly, our maulaví told us, the passages of the Qur'án in which Christians are commanded to obey and follow the Injíl, all refer to that Injíl which was in use in the time of our Prophet. If that copy were current to-day we should, of course, be bound to read it, and, according to the words "ask the people of the Book,"

it would still be our wisdom, as well as our duty, to turn to Christian priests for guidance and instruction. But circumstances alter cases; and, seeing that the Injíl has been so radically altered since that time, the command can no longer be binding.' So saying, the young student waited a reply, not without hope, it must be confessed, that the missionary would acknowledge his error, and turn to the holy doctrines of Islám.

There was no trace of either anger or bitterness in the missionary's voice as he made answer. On the contrary there was an undertone of sadness which the keen ears of Ghulám were quick to detect, and he wondered, as this tall, grave man looked into his eyes with that earnest look which had so impressed him on a previous visit, what his answer would be. It soon came in accents slow and deliberate, and through the note of sadness there was an unmistakable ring of glad assurance which spoke of confidence and power. The missionary spoke with quiet deliberation, and, whilst he deplored the lack of historic knowledge which marked the maulaví's words, Ghulám noticed an entire absence of that bitter invective and hard denunciation which had characterized the latter's speech.

'Yes!' the missionary continued, 'your friend the maulaví has been taught thus, and I can scarcely blame him; for if he had had the benefits of a sound modern education he would never have spoken as he did. No educated Muslim to-day would think of risking his reputation for learning by advancing such arguments; for it is well known now that there are copies of the Injíl in existence to-day which were written many years before the birth of Muḥammad, and which agree, in all essential

particulars, with the copies current throughout the world to-day.'

'What!' interjected the Muslim youth, 'do you mean to tell me that the very same copies are to be seen to-day which were current before the time of our Prophet. Then, if there are such, they must, by the prophecies of Muḥammad which they contain, and their freedom from false teaching about the Prophet 'Isá, prove the utter worthlessness of those copies of the Taurát and Injíl which are current to-day.'

'That is just where you err,' returned the missionary, 'it is just because those ancient copies do not contain any reference to a later Prophet named Muḥammad, and because their teaching with reference to the person and work of the Lord Jesus is the same as that found in the Gospels current throughout the world to-day that we know the Injíl has not been altered subsequent to the time of Muḥammad, as some ignorant people imagine.'

'But how do you know,' retorted Ghulám, 'that the ancient copies you mention are really as old as you say? What are the proofs that these copies of the Christian Scriptures really date back to a time anterior to Muḥammad?'

'The proofs are many,' replied the missionary, 'and are so conclusive that no scholar, Christian or non-Christian, would deny their validity to-day. To begin with, let me use an illustration. When I was in Cairo some years ago I saw in the library of the great al-Azhár University some very ancient copies of the Qur'án. Some of those copies carried their own proof of their age, for they were written in Cufic characters, which, it is well known, was the script in use in the time

of Muḥammad and until about four hundred years after the Hijra. It is obvious, therefore, that a copy of the Qur'án written in Cufic characters must, at least, have been transcribed before the fifth century of the Hijra. Thus we know, beyond question, that the copy of the Qur'án which I saw in Cairo must be at least eight centuries old. Now, similarly, the earliest copies of the Greek Injíl were written in what is called uncial letters, that is, they were written in large capital letters, and not in the cursive or running hand of later times. Now, just as I have seen an ancient copy of the Qur'án in Cufic characters, so also, when I was in London, I visited the British Museum, and there saw, carefully preserved, an ancient manuscript of the Injíl called the Alexandrian manuscript. It is written in the uncial characters which I have just described, and dates from the fifth century of the Christian era, or more than a hundred years before the time of Muḥammad. There is another, and still earlier, copy of the Injíl, written in these same uncial letters, preserved in the Vatican library at Rome, and one called the Sinaitic manuscript now preserved in the great library at St. Petersburg. Both of these date from the fourth century A.D., and were written, therefore, at least two hundred years before the birth of Muḥammad. There are other copies, besides the ones I have mentioned, which were also written before the time of Muḥammad, and are still carefully preserved. Now the important point to remember is this: none of these ancient copies mentions the coming of Muḥammad or suggests the appearance of a true Prophet later than Jesus; but they all contain the same accounts of the life and death of Jesus Christ as are found

in the copies of the Injíl current throughout the world to-day. Therefore you see how foolish it is to pretend that Christians have altered the Injíl since the time of Muḥammad, and how unwise it is to decline to study that Book now, or to "Ask the People of the Book" under the mistaken idea that the present copies of the Injíl are not the same as those referred to in the Qur'án. If they were a "light and guidance" for men then, they are certainly still so to-day, and the oft-repeated praises lavished upon the holy Books by the Qur'án may be equally applied to the present copies of the Injíl.'

'Another proof of the integrity of the Injíl is found', the missionary continued, 'in the ancient versions or translations of that Book still extant. With the early spread of Christianity the need soon arose for translations of the Christian Scriptures into the different languages spoken by the converts, and as early as the second century of the Christian era we find a translation of the Injíl into Syriac. Later, but long before the time of Muḥammad, translations were made into Latin, Gothic and other languages. Now, again, the important fact to observe is that none of these early translations, made with the greatest care from the Greek originals, contains any mention of Muḥammad or presents any version of the life and work of the Lord Jesus Christ radically different from that which appears in the pages of the Injíl which is current to-day. The conclusion is obvious: the Injíl has not been altered, but is to-day the same as it was at and before the time of Muḥammad.'

As the missionary ceased speaking, he reached out his hand, and took from his desk before him a leather-bound copy of the Bible. This he opened, and showed

to the astonished Ghulám a beautiful photographic reproduction of a page of the very Alexandrian manuscript of the Injíl which he had been describing. 'This', said he, 'is an exact copy of the famous manuscript, and you will now be in a position to appreciate the reverential care with which Christians have collected and preserved the ancient copies of their Scriptures.'

The young Muslim took the volume in his hands and reverently kissed it before returning it to its owner, and, then, too overwhelmed with all that he had seen and heard to attempt a further conversation, he asked to be permitted to take his leave. The missionary rose, and as he took the young student's hand, he said in earnest tones, 'Ghulám, have you ever asked God for guidance in this all-important matter?' The young man blushed, for his only idea of prayer had been the repetition of the Arabic canonical prayers taught by Muḥammad to the Arabs of the seventh century. These meant nothing to him. As a boy he had been obliged to memorize them, and, as a duty, he had performed them more or less regularly ever since; but of the precious privilege of communion with God as a Father he knew nothing.

The missionary was quick to note the evident embarrassment which his question had caused, and, without waiting for further answer, he placed a kindly hand on the young man's shoulder and said: 'Ghulám will you kneel with me whilst I pray.' Scarce knowing what he did, the young man knelt beside the Christian, whilst the latter poured out his heart to God.

'Our Heavenly Father,' he cried, 'we are Thine unworthy children. We have nought to call our own. All we have comes from Thee; even the impulses for

good, the desire to know and do Thy will, which, all too seldom, find a fleeting place in our unworthy hearts. Oh! help us now. Help this young seeker after truth. Let the glorious light of Thy truth shine into his soul. Reveal to him Thy great love as manifested in Jesus Christ, and strengthen him to follow and obey the truth as Thou dost reveal it unto him. We ask it in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.' Then, as they rose to their feet, the missionary warmly pressed the hand of the young Muslim, and the latter stepped out into the night.

Ghulám scarce knew whither he went. He had a dim consciousness of wishing to be alone; for his heart was torn with conflicting thoughts, and he longed to quietly consider the fateful interview which had just come to an end. None knew better than he the truth of the missionary's words with regard to the maulaví, for he had long been aware of the ignorance of that gentleman of all questions which lay outside the narrow curriculum of the Provincial madrasa, and he had long since learned the futility of applying to him for assistance in any matter not connected with the Qur'án. It did not, therefore, surprise him that Ibráhím 'Alí knew nothing of the ancient manuscripts of the Taurát and Injíl, and he was, on that account, the more willing to believe that the narrow bigotry of the latter was born of ignorance, and not of wickedness. But the revelation which had come to Ghulám that night was astonishing beyond anything of which he could have dreamed. Yet how plain it all seemed now! It was now that the long drill in an English school yielded its results, and the historic sense, which had slowly and imperceptibly been developing in

his mind, enabled him to appreciate at their full value the momentous facts which the missionary had placed before him.

Yes! there could be no longer any doubt about it; the Injíl had remained unchanged, and was to-day the uncorrupted word of God; still, as ever, a 'light and guidance' to all who would follow its teachings. He must have a copy of that Book without delay, and he resolved to seek an early opportunity to procure one from the missionary—but not that night. No, he must first go home to think, to fight a battle in his own heart such as he had never fought before; for he had heard enough concerning the contents of the Injíl to dimly apprehend where such a study, conducted in a free, unprejudiced spirit, would lead him; and he knew only too well the reception which would be his in his village home when the truth was known there. Thus the anxious thoughts chased each other with lightning rapidity through his mind as he strode on into the night, until at last he found himself on the bank of the Ganges, and, almost without thinking what he did, he sat down on the green grass and gazed across the waters of the river. The place and its loneliness soothed him, and the gentle breeze cooled his heated forehead. Then, as he sat on, he went over again the words of the missionary, and listened once more, it almost seemed, to that wonderful prayer. How different from any kind of prayer which he knew! For the first time in his life he had heard a man speak with God, and the holy atmosphere of those solemn moments still seemed to linger with him. The missionary had prayed for 'guidance'. Yes, he, Ghulám needed that; he had asked for 'light.' Yes; he

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needed that also; for he was enveloped in a darkness so dense that his very soul cried out in agony. How well the foreigner had gauged his needs! how accurately read his thoughts! As the young Muslim soliloquized thus, a voice seemed to say to him, why cannot you also pray? The thought almost stunned him by its suddenness, and yet it would not be put aside, and before the young Muslim, who was already nearer to the light than he knew, had realized what he was doing, he found himself upon his knees and pouring out his heart to God in passionate entreaty. For the first time in his life Ghulám really prayed—and the angels in heaven rejoiced—and the faithful God, whose ears are ever open to the cry of his children, heard and answered, for, as he rose to his feet, a strange quiet and peace seemed to fill his soul, and he knew that God had answered his prayer.

CHAPTER III

THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

THE next day found Ghulám too busy writing to his friend Emárat for a visit to the missionary. He felt that he must without delay share his secret with his friend who had not yet learned that the Injíl was the uncorrupted word of God, still, as ever, a 'light and guidance for men.' Moreover he was determined to learn there the will of God for himself! This was news indeed, and, as his pen flew from page to page, he longed to clasp his chum by the hand once more, and tell him face to face of all the new hopes and fears which surged in alternate confusion through his anxious mind.

The writing of this letter came as a great relief to Ghulám. It gave vent to his pent-up feelings, and enabled him to share with another, and that one his nearest and dearest friend, the burden of a great secret. For it was still a carefully guarded secret, and none of his Muslim fellow-students or the maulaví who was his Persian teacher, even remotely suspected the crisis through which he was passing. Ghulám knew perfectly well what would happen when that secret became known, and he knew, too, that it could not much longer be hid; for he was resolved, at whatever cost, to procure and study a copy of the Holy Bible.

The next day passed slowly, and Ghulám waited impatiently for the deepening shadows of evening to bring him the opportunity he sought for another visit to the mission house. But he had grown bolder, and, scarce waiting for the darkness to shield him from unfriendly eyes, he walked up to the door of the missionary's home, and was ushered in to the well-stocked library of Mr. Williams. It was a copy of the Bible he wanted—nothing more; and the missionary, wise to read the young man's thoughts, took from his shelves a cloth-bound copy of the precious Scriptures and placed it in his hands, and, then, with a warm handshake, allowed him to depart without further conversation. Tightly clasping his new treasure, Ghulám wended his way to the hostel where he and a dozen other Muslim students, under the care of one of the masters, made their temporary home.

The next day was Sunday, and the young student devoted himself to his Bible, determined to learn for himself what it had to teach of God and salvation. He began at the first page; but to his surprise and regret, found no mention of the Prophet Jesus, though he was dimly aware of the fact that in some way or other He was the centre of the Christian faith, and that, to Him, in some way, the divine revelation surely pointed. Still, he was interested, and, as he met, for the first time, the history of Adam and Noah, he was struck with the simple grandeur of the Biblical narratives, and mentally contrasted them with the puerile absurdities of the traditional stories as he had heard them from the lips of wandering maulavís, or read them in such books as the fanciful 'Lives of the Prophets'. As he read on the name of Abraham, 'the Friend of God,' met his gaze, and his

heart thrilled with a new emotion as he realized that he was now face to face with the God-given story of the great Patriarch. Ghulám had heard not a little of Abraham: indeed his was a more familiar name than any other of the Prophets save Muḥammad himself, and the youth could scarce control his excitement as he followed the man of God from his home in Haran, and watched him as he kept alive the torch of monotheistic religion in the midst of the idolatrous nations. Yes! there was no mistaking it, Abraham was the Friend of God, for what else could these startling words, addressed to him by the Deity Himself, mean, 'I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and be thou a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse; and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed' (Gen. xii. 2-3). What, Ghulám wondered, was the meaning of that last clause, 'In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' Surely it meant that from Abraham should spring the last and greatest Prophet, Muḥammad. No wonder, he said to himself, the Qur'án commands men to study the Taurát and Injíl; for if this be the teaching of these ancient Scriptures, then the truth of Islám is assured. Did not Muḥammad, the Prophet of God, trace his descent from Ismá'íl the son of Abraham! Here, then, without doubt, was a clear intimation of the great blessing which should come to the world through the Arabian Prophet. And yet, he asked himself, how is it possible that the missionary should never have noticed this verse? That he could not have done so was certain, for Ghulám remembered distinctly his saying

that the Bible contained no mention of Muḥammad whatever.

The youth was honestly puzzled, for, try as he would, he could find no satisfactory explanation of the missionary's words, and, so, when evening drew near, he again presented himself at the mission house and unburdened his mind to the sympathetic ears of that gentleman. The latter listened patiently as Ghulám read to him the passage which he had found, and a close observer might have noticed a look of yearning compassion in his deepest grey eyes as he looked into the upturned and animated face of the young Muslim before him. 'Yes,' the latter was saying, 'it seems plain to me that this passage contains a prediction of our Prophet Muḥammad; for, he, surely, is descended through Ismá'il from Abraham, "the Friend of God," and obviously, therefore, it is in him that all the nations of the earth are to be blessed—in other words, get salvation.'

For reply the missionary took down his well-thumbed Bible from the desk before him, and, opening it at the seventeenth chapter of Genesis, began reading from the eighteenth verse, 'And Abraham said unto God, Oh that Ismá'il might live before Thee! and God said, nay, but Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his seed after him. And as for Ismá'il, I have heard thee: behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac whom Sarah shall bear unto

thee at this set time in the next year.' 'This,' said the missionary, 'furnishes the answer to your question; for from it you will see that it was to be in the line of Isaac, and not in that of Ismá'il, that mankind was to be blessed. The blessing of Ismá'il was to be a temporal one, and the fulfilment of the promise here made for him is clearly related in the twenty-fifth chapter of this same book of Genesis, where the names of his twelve sons are recorded; but the "everlasting covenant", which manifestly refers to a spiritual blessing, was by God Himself connected with Isaac, the son of Abraham's wife Sarah. And surely,' he continued, 'it is fitting that God's blessing to the world should flow through the fruit of lawful wedlock rather than through the son of a bondmaid. Moreover if you turn to the fourth verse of the twenty-sixth chapter of Genesis, you will find that God there repeated the promise to Isaac himself saying, "in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." This great promise, made in turn to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, was fulfilled in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ; and all who come to God through Him receive the blessings of eternal salvation. 'I wish,' continued the missionary, 'that you would secure a translation of the Qur'án, and study it side by side with the Injíl, and then you would see that Muḥammad never claimed to be a saviour from sin; on the contrary, the Qur'án repeatedly represents him as being commanded by God to ask pardon for his sins. There are several good translations of the Qur'an now to be had in the English language, one of them, at least, the work of a Muslim; and this latter I would recommend you to study. Read it carefully for yourself, and you will find a total absence of

the extravagant claims which have been made for Muḥammad in later centuries by his too-admiring followers.'

'What!' cried the young Muslim, in a voice which was not without a trace of anger, 'do you mean to say that the noble Qur'án does not make Muḥammad the great intercessor at the day of judgement! and did he not work many wonderful miracles in order to prove that he was a great Prophet sent from God!'

'Gently, my young friend,' replied his companion, 'one thing at a time. Prophetship, intercession, miracles are big words, and not so easily disposed of. I would rather, however, that you thought out this important matter for yourself. Empty your mind of prejudice; ask God's guidance and blessing upon your study, and then determine to know for yourself just what is claimed for Muḥammad in the Qur'án, and for Jesus in the Injíl. You will find, as I said before, that Muḥammad is pictured in the Qur'án as a sinner like other men—and if he be a sinner, then clearly he cannot be a saviour—that he never claimed to be an intercessor for sinners at the judgement-seat of God—for, again, how can a sinner be an intercessor?—and, as to miracles, Muḥammad consistently disclaimed the power to work them. My advice to you now is to leave, for the present, your study of the Taurát, and turn to the Injíl where you will find recorded the life and work of the Lord Jesus. When you meet any difficulty, come to me, and I shall help you to the best of my power; and, above all, let me repeat, seek the constant help and guidance of God's spirit that He may lead you into all truth.'

The closing words of the missionary, uttered with deliberation, and almost with solemnity, made a great impression upon Ghulám, and, as he turned to go, something within him seemed to tell him that this tall, earnest, almost sad-faced man was right. But Ghulám scarcely dared, yet, to consider what the missionary's words involved, or to look squarely in the face the momentous issues which hung upon the truth of what he had just heard. The youth had been brought up in an orthodox Muslim home, and had been taught from childhood to look upon Muḥammad as the last and greatest of a long succession of Prophets. As a boy he had often sat spell-bound listening to the marvellous stories of Muḥammad's many miracles, and no lesson had been more persistently drilled into his youthful ears than that the Arabian Prophet would stand up at the great judgement-day, and by his intercession secure salvation for all good Muslims. Little wonder, then, that he was almost shocked at the missionary's words, and, had they been spoken in any other tone, and in any other spirit, the young Muslim would have sprung to his feet and dared any man to speak thus of the Prophet of God. For it was not, as yet, dissatisfaction with Muḥammad which had sent Ghulám to a Christian missionary. He had yet to learn how different was the real Muḥammad of the Qur'án and of history from the wonder-working creation of the traditionists of later centuries. And yet there was an undefined dissatisfaction with Islám, even as he knew it, which he could not analyze. The formalism of much of that which went under the name of religion had often puzzled him, and he had never been able to understand the men, leaders

in the Muslim community, who scrupulously kept the fast during the hours of the day in the month Ramaḍán, and then passed the night in revelling and gluttony. He could not forget, either, the new view of prayer which had come to him since that memorable night when he had heard the missionary speak with his God as with a familiar friend, and, almost unconsciously, he found himself comparing that prayer with the lifeless formalism which compelled so many millions of Bengali Muslims to pray in an unknown tongue, without in the least understanding the meaning of what they said. Yes! and he, too, was learning to pray, for that wonderful experience on the river-bank had taught him much of the privilege of communion with the Heavenly Father whom he was feeling after. Before he returned to his lodgings in the school enclosure, therefore, it was not strange that he should turn aside, and, in the deep shadows of a clump of mango trees which stood on an empty block of land near by, pour out his heart in earnest supplication to God. Then, with his precious Bible tightly clasped to his side, he turned towards his lodgings.

As Ghulám entered the hostel, a noisy group of students approached, and quickly noticed the neatly-bound book under his arm. 'What have you there, Ghulám?' cried the leader, as he reached out his hand and took the book; and then, with a look of incredulous astonishment, he turned to his companions and cried in a voice of bitter sarcasm, 'A Bible! By my life, our friend Ghulám might be taken for a missionary. I wonder what possessed him to get a Bible! Don't you know' he said, addressing Ghulám, 'that this book has been so altered

by the Christians that it can no longer be accepted as the word of God. Why! I thought that every Muslim knew that. I wonder what your father, the honoured President of the Anjumán-i-Islám, would say if he knew that his precious son was reading such a book,' and, so saying, the youth dashed the volume to the ground, and deliberately stamped upon it. For a moment there was silence, and then the group of students burst out into a boisterous roar of laughter, which quickly brought the superintendent of the hostel, a Muslim teacher of the school, upon the scene. As he entered the room, Ghulám stooped down and picked up the soiled book, whilst the band of students turned to their teacher and, in answer to his enquiries, related the incident which had occasioned the laughter.

The master, to their astonishment, showed neither displeasure, nor surprise at one of his pupils reading the Bible; on the contrary he sternly reproved the lad who had so roughly handled the volume of Scripture, saying as he did so, 'Let no boy in this hostel dishonour the holy Taurát and Injíl, for I have read much praise of these ancient Scriptures in the noble Qur'án, and I have often studied the copy which was presented to me by the Bible Society when I obtained my B.A. degree. It is said by many, I know, that these books have been corrupted by the Christians, but when I was at college I read a learned commentary on this self-same Bible, written by one of our greatest Indian Muslims, Sir Syed Ahmad Khán, in which he proves, beyond all doubt, that the Taurát and Injíl have not been altered in the way many modern Muslims suggest, and he quoted many ancient Muhammadan authorities to prove that the

Bible, as it exists to-day, is substantially the same as it was in the time of our Prophet, upon whom be the peace and blessing of God. It ill becomes you students, therefore, who make pretensions to learning, to treat with such disrespect this Book, which our holy Qur'án again and again calls "the word of God." I believe I saw a copy of Sir Syed Aḥmad's book in the public library of Dhánpur the other day when I was looking for another book, and I advise you young men to get it and to read it before you again run into sin by treating the holy Bible as if it were a scripture of these idolatrous Hindus.' So saying, the teacher returned to his private room.

The departure of the teacher was the signal for a remarkable outburst of religious discussion on the part of the students; for, some of them, nurtured in the bosom of orthodox Muslim homes, looked quite aghast at this reversal of current ideas, whilst others, who had been influenced more or less by the newspapers and magazines of the more liberal school of Muslims, hailed with unfeigned delight the unexpected testimony of their teacher. The discussion which ensued was both long and acrimonious, and though Ghulám took little part in it, it was with feelings of satisfaction and thankfulness that he laid his head upon the pillow a little later, and fell into a sound sleep. One remark of his teacher had impressed itself upon his mind, and he mentally resolved that, when the morning dawned, he would visit the public library and secure for perusal the copy of Sir Syed Aḥmad's commentary on the Holy Bible which the teacher had mentioned.

CHAPTER IV

THE MAULAVI'S CHALLENGE

WHEN Emárat received his friend's letter in which the latter had described his interview with the missionary, and detailed the new and fascinating story of the ancient manuscripts of the Bible, he received something of a shock. He had not received the educational advantages which Ghulám had enjoyed, and was, consequently, slower to appreciate the value of the proofs of the integrity of the Christian Scriptures which that story afforded; yet he dimly realized that those proofs were founded on accurate and scientific knowledge, and were not likely to be overthrown by the less-educated, if more intolerant, Muslim priest who posed as the oracle for the whole Muslim community of the district in which he lived. Yet Emárat was not one to take things on trust. His was a nature which loved to probe things to the bottom, and, ere he had finished the perusal of his friend's letter, he had determined to once more interview the Maulaví and acquaint him with the substance of the missionary's reply.

Ibráhím 'Alí was annoyed to learn that his previous words had not finally settled the question of the integrity of the Taurát and Injíl, and his vanity was piqued at the

thought that these young disciples should, after their interview with him, have again sought out the Christian missionary. Moreover, he knew perfectly well that he was not qualified to answer these new arguments of the Christian. Both his training as a Muslim priest and his subsequent reading had been confined within the narrowest limits, and the general question of historical criticism involved in the argument based by Mr. Williams on the ancient manuscripts was as foreign to him as the Greek in which those manuscripts were written. He, very adroitly, therefore, passed over the real issue in silence, and devoted himself to the more congenial task of raising other issues. It would be both wearisome and unprofitable to the reader for us to relate in detail all that the maulaví said in his impassioned reply to Emárat. It was largely made up of abuse of Christianity in general and Christian missionaries in particular, but he did not forget to recall the past glorious history of Islám, nor to remind his youthful listener of the wonderful spread of that faith. The marvellous miracles of Muḥammad, too, as attesting the divine origin of Islám, were repeatedly referred to, and, finally, in a burst of fervid rhetoric, more suited to an audience of hundreds than the solitary youth who sat before him, he concluded thus:—

'Islám is the final and perfect religion of God, which has superseded all others, and which can never be superseded nor overthrown; and the Qur'án is the one rule of faith and practice for all men to-day. The Christian missionary may bring a thousand arguments to prove that the Taurát and Injíl are uncorrupted, but I will not believe him. He says that the noble Qur'án

attests the integrity of those Books, and again I give him the lie. I can bring a dozen verses from the holy Qur'án itself to prove that the Bible has been altered; and our traditions are full of the same teaching. Take your missionary this challenge: tell him I am prepared to meet him in public debate; and, as he has referred to our noble Qur'án, that Qur'án shall be our judge. I undertake to prove from the Qur'án that the Taurát and Injíl have been corrupted by Jews and Christians, and are, therefore, no longer worthy of credence. If I can do so, the missionary is to give an undertaking that he will embrace Islám; whilst, if, on the other hand, I fail to do so, I will become a Christian. Now go!' he exclaimed with a wave of the hand, 'if your fine Englishman refuses my challenge, then let all men know that he is afraid, and that, as Islám won and conquered the lands of the Injíl in the glorious days of old, so again to-day, it has demonstrated its superiority to all other faiths.' Thus saying the Maulaví dismissed his young visitor.

As Emárat returned to his humble home his thoughts were busy. He had been impressed by the assurance of the maulaví; whilst the dramatic challenge thrown down to the Christian missionary had roused his enthusiasm and whetted his curiosity. What, he wondered, would the missionary say in reply. Would he accept the challenge? and if he did, could he answer the arguments of the maulaví? Emárat doubted both, for he was not yet aware of the fact that Mr. Williams, though a Christian priest, had given much time to the study of Arabic, and really knew a great deal more of Arabic and Muhammadan literature than did the maulaví himself. He had

yet to see that wonderful library in the mission house at Dhánpur which contained amongst its treasures not only several Arabic copies of the Qur'án together with translations of that book into English, Persian, Urdu and Bengali, but was also the custodian of a number of the most famous Muslim commentaries of the Qur'án, and provided the reader with complete sets of the most authoritative collections of Muslim traditions.

Now we shall see, mused the young merchant, whether the Christian missionary really knows what he is talking about; and, as Emárat pictured already in his mind the prospective struggle, he inwardly hoped that the Maulaví would be victorious. Yet the thought came to him again that perhaps the Christian would decline the challenge, and content himself with asking, from his home in Dhánpur, an answer to his argument based on the ancient manuscripts. Such a course, Emárat had to admit, would be perfectly legitimate, for, until that argument was disposed of, the missionary had a perfect right to decline to take up the consideration of any other point. Yet Emárat hoped that such would not be the case, for he honestly longed to know the truth, and realized as he did so how inconclusive the result would be if the missionary declined to meet the maulaví. He resolved, therefore, to go himself to Dhánpur and urge the Christian to take up the Muslim's challenge. Emárat was anxious, also, to meet this man who had so profoundly influenced his friend Ghulám, and he was not without hope that he might be able to secure a copy of the Bible for his own perusal. A day or two later, therefore, when business required his presence at the provincial town, he sought out Ghulám and, having

stated the case fully to him, secured the promise of his friend's active support in soliciting the missionary's acceptance of the maulaví's challenge.

The two friends discussed long and earnestly the whole position, and whilst neither had much hope that the missionary would meet the maulavi, they were both exceedingly anxious that such a meeting should take place in order to settle, once for all, the doubt and uncertainty which possessed them. Emárat was impatient of delay, and wished to visit the missionary that evening, but Ghulám had much to tell his friend, and, drawing his arm in his, talked long and earnestly of all the experiences of the last few days as they strolled across the fields that led to the bank of the Ganges. But the dews were heavy this autumn evening, and, as the shadows deepened, the two friends retraced their steps to Ghulám's room in the school hostel, and there discussed together their plans for the future. Emárat was interested, too, in the copy of the Bible which Ghulám now showed him, and he resolved, more than ever, to obtain a copy of that book for himself.

But there were other treasures to be inspected, and, as Ghulám took from his trunk a copy of Sir Syed Ahmad Khán's Commentary on the Holy Bible, his friend's eyes sparkled. Emárat had never heard of the two bulky volumes which now met his gaze, but Sir Syed's name was a household word in every town and village of Eastern Bengal, and the young merchant had often heard the great Muslim leader and founder of Aligarh college spoken of in public meetings, and in the Muslim press in terms of the highest praise. For Syed Ahmad was coming to his own, and the man, who, for his

advocacy of western learning as the stepping-stone to Muslim progress in India had, but a few years before, been anathematized on Muslim platforms and in the Muslim press, was now the popular idol of all but the most conservative Muslims in India. True, the great leader had gone, but the influence of his work remained, and from Cashmere in the north to Tuticorin in the south, Muslim lads, destined to be the leaders of that community a few years hence, were pressing into the spacious halls of the great college at Aligarh, and were imbibing something of the spirit of the great reformer himself.

'Maulaví 'Abdu'lláh, our Persian teacher, advises us to read this book,' Ghulám was saying, 'he is, as you know, a B.A. and a great admirer of Sir Syed. It was he who took my part on the evening when the students dishonoured the Holy Bible, and I verily believe that if he had not appeared when he did, they would have destroyed my copy altogether. This Commentary on the Holy Bible, is a most interesting book, and reveals the wide learning of its illustrious author, for Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, Urdu and English are alike pressed into service in order to elucidate his important theme. But what is of most interest to me is the fact that Sir Syed practically agrees with Mr. Williams in affirming that the copies of the Holy Bible, current throughout the world to-day, are the same as those copies which are so praised in the noble Qur'án, and which were current in the time of the Prophet Muḥammad. I must confess that I had not known before that such a famous Muslim leader held such views; but when I came to study his book, I found

that a great many of the ancient Muslim commentators of the Qur'án took the same position. This was surprise upon surprise, and yet Sir Syed could not have been mistaken, for, in this book, he quotes at length, in the original Arabic and Persian, those great writers to whom he refers. Look here, for example,' continued the youth, as he turned over the pages of the first volume, 'here is a quotation from one of the greatest commentaries of the Holy Qur'án known as the *Tafsir-i-Kabir*.

عن ابن عباس انهم كانوا يحرفون ظاهر التوراة والانجيل
وعند المتكلمين هذا ممنوع لانهم كانوا كتابين بلغا
في الشهرة والتواتر الي حيث يتعذر ذلك فيهما بل كانوا
يكتنون التاويل

'Imám Fakhr'u'd-dín Rázi states in his commentary, on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas, that the Jews and early Christians were altering the text of the Pentateuch and New Testament; but that, in the opinion of eminent doctors and theologians, it was not practicable thus to corrupt the text, because those Scriptures were generally known and widely circulated, having been handed down from generation to generation. No interpolation could, therefore, be made in them, although it is admitted that some people used to conceal their true sense and interpretation.'

'Look here again,' continued Ghulám, as he turned over the leaves to page 74, here is a quotation from the *Tafsir-i-durr-i-Manthir*.

درر منثور سورة البقره و اخرج ابن المذر و ابن ابي حاتم
عن وهب ابن منبه قال ان التوراة والانجيل كما انزلهما الله

لم يغير منهما حرف ولكنهم يضلون بالتحريف والتأويل
والكتب كانوا يكتبونها من عند انفسهم و يقولون هو
من عند الله وما هو من عند الله فاما كتب الله فانها
محفوظة لا تحول

'In the *Tafsir-i-durr-i-Manthūr*,—Mandhar and Ibn Abī Hātim state, on the authority of Ibn Munba that the Taurāt and Injīl are in the same state of purity in which they were sent down from heaven, and that no alterations have been made in them, but that the Jews were wont to deceive the people by unsound arguments, and by wresting the sense of Scripture. There were other books which the Jews had themselves written, although they falsely pretended that those books had come from God. The writings, however, which were really inspired were in careful keeping, and beyond the reach of mutilation.'

'I am astounded' broke in Emārat, 'to hear such words from our Muslim commentators, for I have never heard such opinions expressed by our village priests. Can it be that the latter do not know these things? or are they wilfully concealing them? But if this be really the teaching of the noble Qur'ān, then what did Maulavī Ibrāhim mean by saying that he could bring a dozen verses from our Scripture to prove that the Taurāt and Injīl have been corrupted by Jews and Christians. I confess, dear friend, that I am still in a maze; for all this teaching about the Injīl being still the uncorrupted word of God is so new, and so opposed to everything I have hitherto heard about that book, that I find it difficult to take it in; and yet it agrees exactly with what

the missionary said about the ancient manuscripts of the Taurāt and Injīl. I feel more than ever that we must persuade your Christian friend to come to Islāmābād so that we may hear both sides of this important question, for only thus can our doubts be set at rest, and this intolerable uncertainty brought to an end. But after all, you have only quoted me the opinion of two commentators of the Qur'ān to the effect that the Injīl has not been corrupted. Does Sir Syed Aḥmad bring forward any other authorities?'

'Why yes! many,' replied his friend, 'I haven't time to read them all to you now, and I am sorry that you do not know enough English to be able to read these books for yourself; but I will give you one or two more examples, in order that you may see that the writers quoted by Sir Syed Aḥmad are not obscure and unknown authors, but are amongst the most influential leaders in Islāmic literature. Here, for example, is a quotation on page 69 from the great Bukhārī:—

قال البخاري رحمة الله عليه في صحيحه في بيان قوله
تعالى يحرفون الكلم عن مواضعه يحرفونه يزيلون وليس احد
يزيل لفظ من كتب الله ولكنهم يحرفون يتأولونه على
غير تأويل

'Imām Muḥammad Ismā'īl Bukhārī writes in his book that the word taḥrīf (corruption) signifies to change a thing from its original nature, and that there is no man who could corrupt a single word of what has proceeded from God, so that the Jews and Christians could corrupt only by misrepresenting the meaning of the words of God.'

Here is another quotation on page 70 from the Persian commentary, known as the '*Fúzu'l-Kabír* :—

فوز الكبير في اصول التفسير اما تحريف لفظي در ترجمه
توريت امثال ان بكار من برند نه در اصل توريت پيش اين
فقير چنين محقق شد مرسود قول ابن عباس

'Sháh Wali Ulláh in his *Fúzu'l-Kabír* says that he thinks that in paraphrases and commentaries on books of the Old Testament people were in the habit of corrupting the sense of certain passages of Scripture, but that the original text was not tampered with, and the same is the opinion of Ibn 'Abbás.'

'Well, well!' exclaimed Emárat, 'I must confess that I am astounded at what I have heard to-day, for I was secretly hoping that some one might be able to prove that the words of the missionary about the ancient copies of the Injíl agreeing with the present copies were false; but here we have the witness of these great Muslim scholars agreeing exactly with what he said. Why is it, I wonder, that practically all our village maulavís say that the Injíl has been corrupted?'

There was a moment's silence, and then Ghulám replied: 'To be candid, Emárat, our village maulavís are generally uneducated men, that is to say, their education has been of a very narrow and limited type. Few of them are able to read these great Arabic commentaries for themselves, and perhaps fewer still know enough Arabic to be able to understand them even if they possessed them. My own belief is that the more educated men of our Muslim community know that the Taurát and Injíl have not been corrupted. One thing I know,

and that is that Maulaví 'Abdu'lláh, our Persian teacher believes in their integrity, and regularly reads the Injíl; and I noticed one day in the house of Maulaví Nasíru'd-dín, the sub-judge, a copy of the Holy Bible in English, so it would seem that he also studies that Book. For my own part I am convinced now that the Taurát and Injíl are the uncorrupted word of God, and although, like you, I hope we shall have an opportunity to hear what Maulaví Ibrábím has to say for his belief, or rather unbelief, yet it cannot for a moment be imagined that his judgment is to be compared with that of men like the great Bukhárí and others who have been quoted by Sir Syed Ahmad in his book. The last named expresses his own deliberate judgment, after full and careful examination of the arguments for and against the integrity of the Taurát and Injíl, and after very exhaustive study of our ancient commentaries. On page 91 of his book he writes: 'From all the foregoing authorities it is very evident that, according to the Muḥammadan belief, the expression of corrupting Scripture does not imply an actual mutilation of the text; but simply the modifying of words when read to another, or the concealing of passages, or the transgressing of the commandments of God, or misinterpreting or misconstructing the word of God.'

'One thing I intend to do,' continued Ghulám as he finished reading, 'and that is to obtain at once a good translation of the noble Qur'án and see for myself what is actually written there, not only concerning the Christian Scriptures, but concerning our Prophet's power to intercede at the last day. The missionary, you will remember, said that the Qur'án makes no such claim,

and he even denied that Muḥammad claimed to be a Saviour at all. I confess that all this is inexplicable to me, and when the Christian goes so far as to say that, according to the noble Qur'án, the Prophet Muḥammad was a sinner like other men, then I decline to follow him without further proof. Why, if such were the case, of course he could not intercede, and we Muslims are mad to rest our hopes for salvation upon him for a moment longer.'

When Ghulám finished speaking, there was a profound silence for some seconds, and, then, turning to his friend, he said: 'Emárat, let us ask God's guidance in this difficult matter, for only He can help us at a time like this', and, so saying, the young student fell upon his knees and poured out his heart to God for light and guidance. Then they parted with the promise of a visit to the house of the missionary on the morrow, when, they determined, no means should be left untried to induce him to visit Islámabád and meet Maulaví Ibráhím in public debate.

CHAPTER V

THE MUNSHI'S STORY

ON the following day, as evening drew near, Ghulám and his friend stepped up to the door of the missionary's house, and were ushered into that gentleman's study. He already had a visitor, with whom he was engaged in earnest conversation, but he turned and extended a warm welcome to the two young men who were now shown into the room. Emárat looked with no little interest upon this foreigner, for it was his first actual meeting with one of the ruling race. It is true he had often seen Government officials during their visits of inspection to Islámabád, but those men lived and moved in another world than his, and he had never in all his life actually conversed with an Englishman. The white man who now so graciously welcomed him to his home claimed his interest, however, not merely because he was a foreigner and a Christian, but because he was the man who had so profoundly influenced his friend Ghulám.

Emárat was naturally a hero-worshipper, and being debarred from continuing his own studies, had always rejoiced at the successes of his chum. To tell the truth, he was not a little proud of Ghulám's unbroken record of success as a student, and he had begun to

look upon him as one of very superior intellectual attainments. The judgment of Ghulám always counted much with him, and he was the more interested, therefore, in the foreigner before him from the fact that Ghulám regarded him as a man of God, and as one whose word was to be listened to with the deepest respect. Emárat was more than interested, therefore, as the tall, well-built man before him rose and greeted him with a warm handshake, and, in excellent Bengali, expressed his pleasure at making his acquaintance. But what impressed the young Muslim most was the searching glance of those grey, earnest eyes, which seemed as if they would pierce his very soul and reveal the secrets hidden there. He remembered, then, how Ghulám had spoken of those same eyes and of the world of feeling that seemed to live there. Yes! his friend was right; this man was no deceiver; misled and mistaken he might be; but Emárat felt instinctively that such a man, almost ascetic in his looks, and with strong purpose written deeply upon the lines about his mouth, was a man who believed he had a mission in life. All this flashed through the mind of the young merchant in a moment of time, and then his attention was diverted to the stranger to whom he was now introduced.

The name of the gentleman, the missionary informed them, was Mozír Latif now a Christian preacher, but at one time a Muslim priest. He was usually known, however, amongst his Christian acquaintances, simply as 'the munshí'. Emárat had heard of Muslims embracing the Christian religion before this, but the man who was now introduced to him was the first actual Muslim convert to Christianity whom he had met, and

both he and his friend Ghulám felt their interest aroused to an unusual degree by this stranger. The munshí, for as such we shall hereafter speak of him, was rather short of stature, above the middle age, and with a beard showing unmistakable streaks of grey. He shook hands warmly with the two friends, and by his address showed himself to be a man of more education than is usually associated with village Muslim priests. His home, he informed them, was in Dacca, a large city two hundred miles away, but since his return from the great college at Serampur, where he had been sent for theological training after his baptism, he had been living with his family at Dhánpur, and had been assisting the missionary there in preaching the Christian religion to Hindus and Muslims alike. He had been baptized, so he told them, some ten years before, and concluded by extending to them both a hearty invitation to visit him in his humble home near the mission church.

Greetings over, the impetuous Emárat at once rushed into the subject which was nearest his heart, and, in a few hurried sentences, told the story of his interview with Maulaví Ibráhím at Islámabád, and of the latter's challenge to the missionary to meet him there in public debate concerning the Qur'ánic testimony to the Taurát and Injíl. The missionary listened in silence as the young man told his story, and a close observer might have noticed a faint smile playing about his lips as the youth grew eloquent with enthusiasm, and showed so unmistakably his belief in the ultimate victory of the maulaví. But the hopes of the two friends were dashed to the ground by the very first words which proceeded from the lips of the missionary.

'I have little faith,' he began, 'in such debates. I have almost always avoided them in the past, and when they have taken place they have invariably been unsatisfactory in their results. I do not fear to meet any Muslim in debate, the truth is bound to ultimately prevail; but I feel that such discussions seldom do good, and often do harm by stirring up angry feelings. My advice to your maulaví friend is to prayerfully study this matter for himself. A mere dialectical victory will do neither him nor me any good; and as to his proposal that the vanquished should embrace the religion of the victor—well, I could not entertain it for a moment. Religion is a matter of the heart more than of the head, and I could no more receive the maulaví into the Christian Church, because I had managed to beat him in argument, than I could myself enter Islám because, forsooth, I was not clever enough to answer my opponent's objections. No, religious difficulties are not settled in such an arbitrary fashion.'

'But, sir,' replied Emárat, 'the maulaví says that he can produce a dozen verses from the noble Qur'án which prove, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that the Taurát and Injíl have been corrupted by Jews and Christians since the time of our Prophet. You, on the contrary, affirm that no such corruption has taken place. How, then, are we to arrive at the truth of the matter? You tell us that there are ancient manuscripts of the Christian Scriptures still in existence which were written long before the time of Muḥammad, and which agree with the copies current to-day, but we, as Muslims, cannot accept anything which contradicts our noble Qur'án.'

'But does this contradict the teaching of the Qur'án?'

inquired the missionary. 'I have studied the Qur'án very carefully, and I must confess that I have never met any other teaching; on the contrary, a careful study of every passage of that book which refers to the Taurát and Injíl will show that, whilst the Jews are sometimes accused of altering the meaning of certain passages by false exegesis, and are even accused of hiding the truth, yet the Qur'án nowhere accuses them of altering the text of their Scriptures.'

'Well, sir,' interrupted Ghulám, 'I do wish you would reconsider your decision. We students have not the leisure to study these subjects for ourselves, and yet we long to know the truth of the matter. Moreover, if our maulaví is in error, surely this challenge affords a good opportunity to put him right.'

'There is undoubtedly something to be said for this view of the matter' replied the missionary, 'but I cannot promise now to grant your request. However, come to-morrow or the next day, and in the meantime I will reconsider the whole question and let you know my final decision', and, so saying, he rose and bade the two friends goodnight. Then, turning to the munshí, he said: 'Now, brother, what is your opinion with regard to this matter? You know that I seldom pay attention to these challenges, which, more often than not, are simply made in order to gain for the challenger a notoriety which he would not otherwise possess. My own experience leads me to think that such challenges are seldom made with the desire of learning the truth. On the contrary, the Muslim who is proved to be in the wrong, instead of acknowledging the fact and seeking for further light, usually becomes a most bitter enemy; and

I must confess that I view with the gravest misgivings a meeting of the nature indicated in this challenge.'

'That is true sir', replied the munshí, 'and yet, in this case, I am inclined to advise your acceptance of the challenge. You see, there are others, besides the maulaví himself, to be considered. There are these young men, who really seem anxious to know the truth, and then there is that greater audience which will be present to listen to the discussion at Islámabád. For their sakes I believe it would be best for you to go. We can arrange beforehand the terms of the debate in such a manner that each speaker shall have a certain allotted time in which to set forth his views, and we shall, moreover, insist upon the speaker keeping to the terms of the challenge, so that the usual Muslim practice of rushing from one point to another will be absolutely vetoed. My proposal is this: let me go to Islámabád personally and arrange the terms of the debate with the maulaví. These shall be written out and signed by both you and him. If such a course be pursued, there will not be, I think, any unseemly wrangling or introduction of irrelevant matter.'

'Well,' responded the missionary, 'you know these Muslims much better than I do, and if your mature judgment advises such a course, then I am ready to fall in with it. But one thing I must insist upon, and that is, that there must be no wandering from the subject set down for discussion. Then, too, a time must be fixed which will make it possible to carry out the programme as previously arranged. It is a favourite practice with Muslim apologists to rush off "to prayers" when they find themselves getting into difficulties in debates of this

nature. Such a thing must not be allowed to happen at Islámabád.'

So, much to the delight of Ghulám and Emárat, it was arranged that the munshí should proceed to Islámabád and arrange for a public discussion in the terms of the challenge made by the maulaví. At the munshí's suggestion the week following Christmas was fixed for the debate; for, said he, 'Ghulám will then be at home for his holidays, and will be able to listen to and profit by the discussion.'

On the following day, as Ghulám and Emárat were taking their evening walk together, the conversation drifted to the munshí.

'He seems an educated fellow, too,' Ghulám was saying, 'I wonder what led him to become a Christian. Does he, I wonder, know Arabic sufficiently well to understand the noble Qur'án? I wonder, too, whether he has studied the Taurát and Injíl.'

'Personally I cannot understand any Muslim exchanging his religion for Christianity', retorted Emárat, 'What if the Injíl be the uncorrupted word of God! Did not the Qur'án come after the Injíl and abrogate its doctrines and precepts! and was not Muḥammad the last Prophet! I confess it has always been a puzzle to me how any Muslim could become a Christian, and yet I know that in the Panjáb quite large numbers of our co-religionists have, as a matter of fact, been baptized and have embraced Christianity. I, like you, am anxious to know what induced the munshí to forsake our glorious religion, and I have a proposal to make. You remember how, when we were together last evening, he invited us to visit him in his home. Well,

why not let us go and have a talk with him. Perhaps we may be able to persuade him to abandon Christianity and return to the religion of his fathers. What do you say to a visit this very evening ?'

Ghulám cordially agreed to the proposal of his chum, and soon the two friends found themselves standing before the door of the munshí, by whom they were at once ushered into a small room which did duty as a guest-room. The room was simply furnished, but the lads both noticed a well-filled book-case in one corner, whilst, hung prominently on the walls, were several beautiful illuminated Scripture texts in English and Bengali. The munshí, who expressed himself both pleased and honoured by the visit, was evidently disturbed from some serious study by the advent of the two young men, for, on the little table in the centre of the room, they noticed two or three open Urdu books, whilst a pile of disordered manuscript lay littered around.

'I fear', began Ghulám, 'that we are trespassing upon your time, for it is evident that you are busy.'

'Oh no, not at all', came the quick reply, 'what I am doing now is work which I keep for my spare hours. I am always pleased to see visitors.' And then ensued a lot of desultory conversation, which would be of little interest to the reader, and has little bearing upon our story, until, at length, Emárat, unable to restrain his impatience longer, broke in with the question which had long been hovering upon his lips: 'But Munshí Sáhíb' he exclaimed, 'What induced you to forsake our glorious faith and become a Christian ?'

The young Muslim little thought how the Christian preacher had been praying and waiting for such an

opportunity as this question afforded, and the latter was soon engaged in a long and earnest description of his fruitless search after peace until he found it in Christ. It would take too long to relate to the reader all the wonderful steps in that long search ; but the preacher's eyes again and again filled with tears as he told how, years before, he had found Islám unable to satisfy the deepest needs of his heart, and had ultimately abandoned the world in despair and adopted the garb of a fakír or ascetic, and wandered from place to place in search of peace. Šúffism, too, with its mystical pantheism, had been tried and found wanting until, finally, the wanderer had found rest to his soul through the perusal of a copy of the Injíl which had fallen into his hands.

The story was a long one, and the two friends were strangely moved by its recital, for they had never met religious experience of such a type as this in all their lives, and they mentally contrasted it with the empty formalism of most of what they had been taught to call religion. What impressed them most of all, was the awful sense of sin which the munshí had experienced before coming into the light. Was it true, they asked themselves, that all their vaunted works were as filthy rags in the sight of the all-holy God ? Could it be, as the munshí said, that good works could never cancel sin ? Such thoughts as these flashed, unbidden, through their minds as the preacher told his story, and, when he had finished with a triumphant testimony to the peace and joy of forgiven sin through the atoning death of Christ, the lads found their own eyes wet with tears. But doubts were not yet dead, and Emárat, impulsive as ever, was soon plying his new friend with more questions.

'But what', he asked, 'was there in Islám and the Qur'án that failed to satisfy your soul? Surely the intercession of our great Prophet will ensure the salvation of all true Muslims; and, if so, then what need of Christianity?'

'Oh!' replied the munshí, 'that is just where Islám fails. In the first place, the Qur'án does not teach that Muḥammad will intercede for Muslims at the Judgment Day; on the contrary it says in Súratu'l-Baqara verse 48:—

وَأَتَّقُوا يَوْمًا لَا تَجْزِي نَفْسٌ عَنْ نَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَقْبَلُ مِنْهَا
شَفَاعَةً وَلَا يُوْخَذُ مِنْهَا عَدْلٌ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ

'And fear ye the day when soul shall not satisfy for soul at all, nor shall any intercession be accepted from them, nor shall any ransom be taken, neither shall they be helped.'

'In the next place, according to the Qur'án, all Muslims must first enter hell, and, only after suffering the punishment of their sins there will they be finally released. Such teaching brings no comfort to one burdened with sin, nor does it give hope and courage to the human soul as it stands face to face with the last great enemy, death.'

'What!' interjected Ghulám, 'do you really mean to say that the Qur'án teaches this horrible doctrine? Our maulavís never speak of this, nor do they ever hint at such a gloomy future for the followers of the last Prophet.'

'Your maulavís, unfortunately, do not all know what the Qur'án really teaches' replied the munshí,

'nor do they care to speak of it when they do know but one of the greatest of them, the late Maulaví Imádu'd-Dín, who afterwards became a Christian priest, was so impressed with this teaching of the Qur'án that it formed one of the factors which decided him to forsake Islám.'

'Where is it taught in the noble Qur'án,' interjected Ghulám, 'that every Muslim must enter hell before he can ultimately hope for the joys of Paradise?'

'Here is the passage,' replied the munshí as he took up a copy of the Arabic Qur'án from his table and opened it at the 69th and 72nd verses of Súratu Maryam (xix)

فَوَرَبِّكَ لَنَحْشُرَنَّهُمْ وَالشَّيَاطِينَ ثُمَّ لَنَقْصِرَنَّهُمْ حَوْلَ جَهَنَّمَ
جِثْيًا . . . وَإِنْ مِنْكُمْ إِلَّا وَارِدُهَا

'And I swear by thy Lord! we will surely gather together them, and the Satans; then will we set them on their knees round hell . . . no one is there of you who shall not go down unto it.'

'Or, as it is explained in the *Tafsír-i-Jalálain* *اي داخل جهنم* that is, "enter hell". 'Abbás explains the verse by saying that it covers every one except the Prophets and Apostles; but the Qur'án, in this place, distinctly says, that every one must enter hell.'

'Well, I have never heard anything like this before', exclaimed Emárat, as he heaved a deep sigh. 'Can it be that our great Prophet is not powerful enough to save his followers from such a fate?' 'Only one who is absolutely free from sin himself can be a saviour of others,' returned the Christian, 'but the Qur'án makes it clear that

Muhammad was a sinner like other men, and was, so that book says, repeatedly commanded by God to ask pardon for his sins. There is a verse of the Qur'án which makes it abundantly clear that no sinner can be a saviour of others. It is found in Súratu'l-Fáṭir (xxxv), verse 19 and runs thus *وَلَا تَزِرْ وَزِرَّتْكَ وَزَرَ أَخْرَجِي* "and the burdened soul

shall not bear the burden of another." From this verse it is clear that those who put their trust in the intercession of Muhammad are leaning upon a broken reed.'

'Yes!' interjected Ghulám, 'but our maulavís tell us that Muhammad was sinless, and they assure us that, in the passages of the Qur'án to which you refer, he was only told to ask pardon for the sins of his followers.'

'I used to think so once,' replied the munshí, 'but a thorough study of the various passages in which such teaching is found convinced me that, according to the Qur'án, Muhammad was commanded to ask pardon for his own sins. The grammatical construction of the passages not only requires this meaning, but I found, also, when I studied the matter carefully, that the best ancient commentators of the Qur'án also admitted it, and in some instances related the very faults for which Muhammad was commanded to ask pardon. Let me give you one or two examples which will make the matter clear. In Súratu'n-Nisá' (iv) 106, we read:—

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ
بِمَا أَرَاكَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَكُنْ لِلْخَائِثِينَ خَصِيمًا وَاسْتَغْفِرِ اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا

'Verily, we have sent down the Book to thee (O Muhammad) with the truth, that thou mayest judge between men according as God hath given thee insight; But with the deceitful ones dispute not: and implore pardon of God; verily, God is Forgiving, Merciful.' The commentators tell us that the sin for which Muhammad was told to ask pardon in this verse, was that of resolving to unjustly punish an innocent man for a crime committed by one of his (Muhammad's) followers whom the Prophet was wishing to save from punishment. Another sin of Muhammad is referred to in Súratu't-Tauba (ix) 44. There it is written:

عَفَا اللَّهُ عَنْكَ لِمَ أَذْنَتْ لَهُمْ

'God forgive thee (O Muhammad), why didst thou give them leave (to stay behind)'. It is said that at the time of the battle of Tabúk Muhammad, contrary to God's orders, gave permission to certain of his soldiers to stay at home instead of proceeding to the fight. For this he is told in the verse I have quoted to ask pardon of God.'

'Yet another sin of Muhammad mentioned in the Qur'án is the one referred to in Súratu'l-'Abasa (lxxx) 1-9. The Qur'anic reference to it runs thus:—

عَبَسَ وَتَوَلَّى أَنْ جَاءَهُ الْأَعْمَى وَمَا يُدْرِيكَ لَعَلَّهَ بَرَكٌ
أَوْ يَذْكُرُ فِتْنَةً أَمْ مِّنْ أَسْتَعْزَى فَأَنْتَ تَكْذِبُ
وَمَا عَلَيْكَ الْأَلْبُسُ وَآمَأَ مِنْ جَاءَكَ يَسْعَى وَهُوَ يَخْشَى
فَأَنْتَ عَنْهُ تَلَهَى

"He frowned, and he turned his back, because the blind man came to him. But what assured thee that he would not be cleansed; or be warned and the warning profit him? As to him who is wealthy, to him thou wast all attention; yet is it not thy concern if he be not cleansed; but as to him who cometh to thee in earnest, and full of fears—him thou didst neglect." Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl, in his *Selections from the Qur'án* (p. 317) says of this passage that, "It is related that Muḥammad had once turned away from an unfortunate (blind) beggar, which, later on, made him quite uneasy, and only when this Súra was revealed was he assured of his repentance having been accepted of his Lord." The ancient commentators of the Qur'án give many interesting details of the incident referred to in this verse. Qáḍí Baiḍáwí, for instance, tells us that the blind man, whose name was 'Abdu'lláh ibn Umm Makhtúm, came to the Prophet when the latter was engaged in conversation with some of the wealthy leaders of the Quraish. Vexed at the interruption, the Prophet "frowned and turned his back" on the blind suppliant. Later Muḥammad repented, and whenever he met Ibn Umm Makhtúm was wont to say:—
مرحبًا بمن عاتبني فيه ربي

"Welcome to him on whose account my Lord hath reprimanded me." Baiḍáwí further tells us that Muḥammad showed the sincerity of his repentance by appointing Ibn Umm Makhtúm to be twice Governor of Madína. It is clear, therefore, both from the words of the commentators and from the Qur'án itself, that Muḥammad committed a grave fault in his unjust treatment of the blind beggar."

'Another passage of the Qur'án which clearly indicates

that Muḥammad was a sinner like other men is that found in Súratu'l-Faṭḥ (xlvi) 1-2. They run as follows:—

إِنَّا فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُبِينًا لِيُغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِن
ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ

"Verily, We have won for thee an undoubted victory, in that God forgiveth thee thy earlier and later sin." All the commentators agree that the person addressed in this verse is Muḥammad. Some of them, amongst them 'Abbás, take the "former" sins to refer to sins committed by Muḥammad before his call to the prophetic office, and the "later" sins to those which he committed after that call. Other commentators say the words refer to his lying with his Coptic slave Mary contrary to his oath, and to his marrying Zainab the wife of his adopted son. Whichever view be the correct one, it is evident that the verse clearly proves that Muḥammad was a sinner, and so unable to save others."

'Let me show you one more verse of the Qur'án dealing with this matter before I close the book,' said the munshí, as he turned over the leaves. 'Look here at this passage in Súratu Muḥammad (xlvii) 21.

وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لِدُنْيِكَ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ

"And ask pardon for thy sin (O Muḥammad), and for the believers, both men and women."

'You see here', continued the munshí, 'that Muḥammad is commanded to ask pardon for his own sins, and the sins of male and female believers. Some Muslim apologists are fond of explaining the verses of the Qur'án

where Muḥammad is told to ask pardon for his sins, by saying that the passages refer to the sins of his followers. They quite overlook the fact that in such a case the Arabic would read *وَاسْتَغْفِرِ لِدُنْيَاكَ* and not *وَاسْتَغْفِرِ لِدُنْيَاهُمْ*.

In these passages the pronoun is used in the second person, and not in the third, and the only possible translation is "thy sin". Moreover, in the passage of the Qur'án which I have just quoted the words are, "Ask pardon for thy sin, and for the believers, men and women". Is it not clear, then, that in this passage, at least, Muḥammad is commanded to ask pardon, first for his own sins, and, afterwards, for the sins of his followers? That being so, is it not your highest wisdom, my dear young friends, to turn to the sinless Prophet 'Isá for salvation? I have shown you that "no burdened soul can bear the burden of another", and I have made it clear to you that Muḥammad had his burden of sin like other men. Why, then, shut your eyes to such an obvious fact, and, like the ostrich which buries its head in the sand, refuse to recognize the danger which threatens you? Only one sinless and perfect Being has trodden this earth, and Injíl, Qur'án and Ḥadīth with one voice proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ to be that One. Have you never heard the tradition which says:—

مَا مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مَوْلُودٌ إِلَّا يَمْسُهُ الشَّيْطَانُ حِينَ يُولَدُ
بِئْسَ تَهْنِئَةٌ صَارَ مِنْ مَسِّ الشَّيْطَانِ غَيْرَ مَرِيمَ وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ

"There is no son of Adam who has been born except he was touched by Satan at the time of his birth. Then

at the touch of Satan he cried out—with the exception of Mary and her son." I remember once reading the celebrated *Mishkátu-l-Maṣābil* and being much struck with a passage in that book relative to Muḥammad's inability to save sinners. The tradition runs thus:—

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَنْ يَنْجِي أَحَدٌ
مِنْكُمْ عَمَلَهُ قَالُوا وَلَا أَنْتَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ قَالَ وَلَا أَنَا إِلَّا أَنْ
تَغْمِدَنِي اللَّهُ مِنْهُ بِرَحْمَتِهِ

"The Apostle of God (upon whom be the blessing and peace of God) said, The works of none of you will ever save you. They replied, and not even you, O Apostle of God? He replied, not even I unless God cover me with his mercy." In this tradition Muḥammad confesses himself entirely dependent upon the mercy of God for his own salvation. How vain, then, to look to him to save you from the punishment of your sins. Oh my friends be warned in time, and take refuge with the sinless prophet 'Isá. He alone can save, because He alone is sinless. The Injíl tells us that He, the eternal "Word of God", took human flesh and dwelt amongst men, and at last offered up himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. Only through the merit of that atonement can we obtain the forgiveness of our sins and reconciliation with God. Be warned, then, whilst there is time. This transitory life will soon come to an end, and then we shall each one appear before the great judgment throne to give an account of our deeds. The Prophet 'Isá Himself has

said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, no man cometh to the Father but by me." Take refuge with Him, then, and you will find a peace and joy such as you have never known before.'

When the munshí finished speaking there was silence for a moment, and then Emárat said: 'By my life! we have heard strange things to-day—Muham-mad a sinner and unable to intercede; all Muslims destined to hell fire; and salvation, not by the merits of our own righteous acts, but through the atoning death of the Prophet 'Isá! If what you say be true, then little wonder that so many intelligent Muslims in the Panjáb and North-Western Provinces are embracing Christianity. Oh, how I wish I knew Arabic sufficiently well to be able to study these things for myself.'

'At least you may study them in translations,' returned the munshí, 'for even if you cannot use English translations, the Qur'án may now be had in both Urdu and Bengali. Here, for instance,' he said, pointing to the table before him, 'is a Bengali translation of the Qur'án with the Arabic text and notes. It is published at 41, Lower Circular Road, Calcutta. By writing to the manager at that address you may easily procure a copy for yourself.'

It was by this time growing late, and so, after a few more remarks, the two young men rose, and thanking the munshí for his hospitality, took their departure. Little was said as they passed down the street, for their minds were busy; and at the school gate Emárat said good-bye to his friend and turned his face towards the bazaar, where a bullock-cart stood waiting to take him back to his home at Islámabád.

CHAPTER VI

NEW VIEWS OF TRUTH

WHEN Ghulám said good-bye to his friend he entered his room in the school hostel and soon retired to rest. But he could not sleep, and tossed from side to side in the vain endeavour to blot out from his memory the events of the evening. Do what he would, the earnest words of the munshí continued to ring in his ears, and he seemed to picture over again this determined seeker after truth as he tramped the forest glens and the wild mountain sides in search of a peace which Islám had failed to give him. Yes, said the young student to himself, there is no mistaking the light and joy which shine from his eyes now. And it was the Injíl which taught him the way of peace: the book which I possess, but of which I know so little. Perhaps I, too, shall find there the answer to all my questions, and the solution of all my difficulties. And, then, almost before he realized what he was doing, the young student had left his bed, and by the light of the little kerosine lamp which he called his own, was pouring over the pages of the Injíl. He had opened it at the story of the birth of Jesus Christ, and, as he read the inspired narrative, he came to the words of the angel, 'and thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins'. As he

did so, he remembered the earnest, almost solemn words of the missionary, 'Muḥammad, in the Qur'án, never claimed to be a saviour from sin.' What did it all mean? Was it true, then, as the missionary had said, that the Prophet Jesus was the one God-given saviour of the world? Then the munshí's words came back to him, how that Muḥammad was, according to the Qur'án itself, a sinner like other men. Yes! the truth was beginning to dawn upon him at last, and as he read the words before him once again, they seemed to be burned into his very soul. 'Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.'

Yes! this Jesus was great, of that there could be no doubt, for here in the third chapter of Matthew was John the Baptist, himself a great prophet, testifying that the Christ who should come after him 'is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear.' And then, as Ghulám read on, he reached the last verse of the chapter where it was recorded that, at the baptism of Jesus, the heavens opened 'and lo! a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.' Here was a discovery indeed, for Ghulám had always been taught by the village priest that the Christians had invented the name 'Son of God' for the Prophet Jesus. But the young student could not doubt the evidence of his own eyes, and here, clearly enough, the Injíl itself recorded the fact that God himself had applied the title 'Son' to Christ. Whatever, then, might be the meaning of the term, Ghulám saw clearly that, in calling Jesus the 'Son of God', the Christians were only following the teaching of God's word. The discovery came as a great

surprise to Ghulám, for if there was one thing, more than another, against which the itinerant Muslim preachers, who at various times had visited Islámabád, loved to inveigh, it was the ascription of this very title 'Son of God' by the Christians to Jesus Christ. Yet the young Muslim now saw quite clearly that the words were a part of divine revelation, and, as such, must be accepted by all who accepted that revelation. He remembered, too—and the thought brought him consolation in his time of perplexity—that Maulaví Ibráhím had once told him there were many things in the Qur'án the meaning of which was hidden from men, and which must be accepted by faith. The matter had made such an impression upon him at the time that he had remembered the very words, 'He it is who has revealed to thee the Book, of which there are some verses clear to be understood—they are the mother of the book—and others are ambiguous . . . but none know the interpretation of it except God,' and he could recall quite clearly the maulaví's explanation, how that these 'hidden' truths of revelation must be accepted by faith on the authority of Scripture alone. Of such passages were the words in the Qur'án about God's hands and feet, as well as the letters A, L, M, etc., at the head of certain chapters, which no one could explain; and now, as the youth re-read the words of the Injíl. 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,' he had not the slightest doubt that this, too, must be accepted in faith until such time as God should make clear its meaning. As he thought over the passage his doubts began to clear, and he said to himself: If the Qur'án abounds in passages which are beyond human

comprehension, it should not surprise us if the Injíl also contains things difficult to be understood. To me, therefore, it is clear that Jesus is the 'Son of God', and I must acknowledge him as such, even though I do not fully understand the meaning of that relationship. Then Ghulám again took up the book before him. But he could not read. He was overwhelmed by the discovery he had made in the first three chapters of the Injíl: Jesus Christ the 'Saviour' of the world and 'Son of God'! Muḥammad had no such titles as these. At most, he was the 'Apostle of God', and, according to the Qur'án, an erring, sinful mortal like himself. No wonder, continued the youth to himself, that many learned Muslims were turning Christian! no wonder that the missionary spoke with such assurance! and, then, wearied out with the excitement of the hour, he flung himself upon his bed, and was soon fast asleep.

The next evening found the young student again at the munshí's. He felt, somehow, that the latter could help him more than the foreign missionary. For one thing, the munshí had been himself a Muslim, and had fought his way through the same doubts and difficulties which now confronted him, and he longed to unburden his heart to a friend as sympathetic as he felt the latter would be. This time he found the munshí reading a religious paper, whilst at the other end of the room sat a beautiful girl of some seventeen years, who was helping two younger boys, evidently her brothers, with their English lessons. The munshí rose and greeted Ghulám with undisguised pleasure, and then introduced him to the young lady. She was his eldest daughter, Amíran by name, and had recently returned from school in Cal-

cutta where she had successfully passed her Matriculation Examination. Ghulám was struck at once with the cultured tone of her brief and somewhat bashful replies, and he mentally contrasted her speech with the ungrammatical and often coarse language of too many of the Muslim girls of his own family circle. He remembered how his friend Emárat had been early married to a girl of ten years, whose sole accomplishment consisted in the ability to read the Arabic Qur'án. No one, of course, expected her to understand it! and, although she could neither read nor write her own mother tongue, Bengali, yet many had congratulated Emárat upon the wedding. Ghulám knew, too, that his own father was contemplating some such match for him, and he viewed with feelings something akin to dismay the prospect of such a union.

What a difference, he said to himself, the girl before him presented! Cultured, and yet modest, able to cook and sew, she was yet capable of helping her younger brothers to master the intricacies of English grammar; and, as he thought of these things, Ghulám gazed with admiration at the tall and graceful figure of the girl, who, the first brief introductions over, had returned to her seat, and in low tones, continued her lesson. Yes! she was beautiful; and Ghulám forgetting for the moment the object of his visit, was half regretting that the all-too-brief interview could not have been prolonged. He was soon brought back, however, to the prosaic present by the voice of his host, who enquired whether Emárat had returned to his village home. The silence thus broken, the conversation quickly turned to those deeper subjects which lay so near the young Muslim's heart,

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and, encouraged by the sympathetic and kindly words of the munshí, he soon found himself unburdening his soul of all the doubts and perplexities which still lingered there.

The munshí listened patiently to the young student's story, and a tear glittered in his eye as the youth told of that memorable experience on the banks of the Ganges, when he first learned what it meant to pray. Then followed a heart-to-heart talk, in the course of which the munshí once more referred to the wonderful peace and joy which had become his since placing his trust in Jesus. 'Above all,' he concluded, 'continue to pray to God for light and guidance, for He has promised to hear the prayer of all who cry unto Him in their time of need; and if you will deliberately place yourself in His hands, He will certainly direct you by His Spirit, until you arrive at a certainty concerning the great questions which now confront you.' Then the two knelt together whilst the munshí offered up a simple, childlike prayer to the Heavenly Father above, in which he commended the young enquirer who knelt by his side into the Divine keeping, and prayed that he might be led out into the glorious liberty of the Gospel of Christ. Then, as they rose from their knees, he warmly pressed Ghulám's hand, and bade him good night.

CHAPTER VII

THE PUBLIC DISCUSSION

IT was the last day of the year, and, under a huge canopy, erected at no little expense by Maulaví Ismá'il Jabbár, Ghulám's father, a restless and excited crowd of Muslims awaited the long-talked-of discussion between Maulaví Ibráhím and the missionary, Mr. Williams. The day was bright and sunny, but a cold wind blew from the north, and ever and anon raised a cloud of dust in the spacious courtyard of the great landowner. The people sat on mats which had been spread on the ground, but at one end of the enclosed area a few chairs had been placed upon a raised platform, and testified to the importance of the great man whose home was now to be the scene of the first public discussion between Muslim and Christian in that part of East Bengal.

News of the gathering had spread far and wide, and the people were literally packed into the available space, waiting, with no little impatience, for the chief actors to appear. The audience was a curious one. The majority of those who composed it, one could easily see, were ignorant peasants, as little able to judge of the merits of such a discussion as they were to understand the Arabic in which they had been taught to say their

prayers five times a day. Of the rest, a few were intelligent merchants with some education, several were maulavís from the surrounding villages, two were doctors, some half a dozen taught the rising generation how to spell more or less correctly the simple Bengali of the primary schools, and last, but not least, there was Ismá'il Jabbár, landowner, president of the Anjumán-i-Islám, and chairman-elect of the meeting now to be held.

The munshí had carried out well his self-appointed task of arranging for the meeting, and a code of rules, which limited both the subject and the method of discussion, had been drawn up and signed by both maulaví and missionary. Briefly, these limited the discussion to the original terms of the challenge—the Qur'anic testimony to the Christian Scriptures—and provided that each speaker should have the platform in undisputed possession for thirty minutes, after which each should be given a further fifteen minutes for reply.

It still wanted some minutes to ten, the hour fixed for the discussion, when the missionary arrived at the pandal, and, accompanied by the munshí, proceeded to place on the low table which had been provided for the purpose, a number of Arabic, Urdu and Bengali books which he had brought with him in his bullock-cart. There was a lull in the buzz of conversation as he appeared, and necks were strained to see the foreigner who was soon to cross swords with the Islámabád champion. The first impression created by the missionary was a good one, for he was no sooner within the large enclosure than he began to courteously salute those nearest to him, and, as Ghulám's father, who had been waiting

his arrival, hastened forward to greet him, he returned the latter's polite and effusive welcome with evident pleasure. Then followed introductions; and the audience was quick to notice that the missionary extended his hand in friendly greeting to Maulaví Ibráhím, who now advanced at the call of the chairman; and, then, these formalities over, the latter opened the meeting in a short introductory speech before calling upon the champion of Islám to state his case.

As Maulaví Ibráhím rose to address the meeting he received a tremendous ovation, and the whole audience rose and cheered again and again, whilst delirious shouts of 'Alláh Akbár' resounded through the great assembly. Surely if ever man entered upon a great task under favourable circumstances, Maulaví Ibráhím did that December morning as he faced nearly a thousand men, all of whom, but two, were in deepest sympathy with him, and longed to see him come victorious out of the battle of words upon which he was about to enter. But stop! did we say, all but two; nay, but there was one other in that great assembly, besides the two Christian preachers, whose heart beat in unison with theirs, and who longed that the truth might prevail, and error be for ever cast out of that Bengal village, and yet, as Ghulám listened to those hoarse cries of 'Alláh Akbár' which swept the pandal and made the very air electric, his heart sank within him; for it was two against a thousand, and, as he knew only too well, a thousand blinded with prejudice and intoxicated with excitement. Would they give the Christian fair play? Could his father, just and polite though he was, restrain the angry feelings of a hostile mob? As the young student mused

thus, he half regretted having pressed the missionary to come. But there was little time for reverie, for the maulaví was on his feet, and, as the first wild burst of welcome died away, he began his speech, and Ghulám's attention was thereafter rivetted upon his old teacher.

The maulaví began by an eloquent reference to the past glories of Islám, and he reminded his hearers of the wonderful spread of the religion of the Arabian Prophet in the early centuries of its history. Then, turning to the matter before him, he called the attention of those present to the fact that another great Faith was claiming to share with Islám the religious conquest of India. 'Rather', he continued, 'that Faith claims to be the only religion for men to-day, and its emissaries are everywhere seeking to turn the steps of the unwary, and force upon them a Scripture which has, long since, been both corrupted and abrogated. Wherever we go, in village or in market, we meet these Christian preachers with their Injíl, and, not content with teaching that that book is the uncorrupted word of God, they even presume to say that our noble Qur'án teaches the same thing! That being so, I have undertaken to prove from the pages of our Holy Book that the Jews and Christians have so corrupted and mutilated the Taurát and Injíl, both by addition and subtraction, that those books can no longer be regarded as the word of God, and are, therefore, quite unworthy of our serious regard. It is unnecessary for me to deal with this matter in detail. You all know that it is as I say; and so I shall proceed at once to prove by quotations from our Holy Qur'án that the Jews and Christians have not only cut out many prophecies concerning the Prophet of God, on whom be

the peace and blessing of God, but have, likewise, added many false stories about the Prophet 'Isá, on whom be the peace and blessing of God. The first verse to which I will call your attention is found in Súratu'l-Baqara, (ii) 70, and runs thus,

أَفَتَطْمَعُونَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا لَكُمْ وَقَدْ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ
كَلَامَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يَحْرِفُونَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا عَقَلُوا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ

'Desire then ye that for your sakes (the Jews) should believe? Yet a part of them heard the word of God and then perverted it after they had understood it, and knew that they did so.' 'Here then is my first proof,' continued the maulaví, 'that the Jews and Christians have corrupted the Taurát and Injíl, for it is here distinctly stated that certain of them 'perverted', in other words corrupted, the word of God after they had heard and understood it. Is it not clear from this passage that the Taurát and Injíl have been altered by Jews and Christians? Of course it is; and I can only wonder at the temerity of these missionaries in affirming so confidently that their Scriptures are the same to-day as they were before the time of the Prophet Muḥammad, on whom be the peace and blessing of God. It is not difficult to guess at the nature of the alterations here referred to, and without doubt they included the erasure of the name of Muḥammad the Apostle of God, on whom be the peace and blessing of God, as well as the addition of many false doctrines about the person of the Prophet 'Isá, on whom be the peace and blessing of God.

Another verse of the noble Qur'án which teaches that

the Taurát and Injíl have been corrupted is in Súratu'l-Baqara (ii) 154. It is there written,

لِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنزَلْنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالْهُدَىٰ مِنْ
بَعْدِ مَا بَيَّنَّاهُ لِلنَّاسِ فِي الْكِتَابِ أَُولَٰئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ
اللَّهُ الْعِزُّونَ

'Verily those who conceal aught that we have sent down, either of clear proof or of guidance, after what we have so clearly shewn to men in the book, God shall curse them, and they who curse shall curse them'. Here, again, we see it distinctly stated in the noble Qur'án, that some people of the Jews used to 'hide' certain parts of the Taurát, and though we are not told to what those passages referred, yet it is not difficult to understand that they referred to the coming of the last and greatest Prophet Muḥammad, on whom be the peace and blessing of God.

'Again in Súratu 'Alí 'Imrán (iii) 64, we have another clear charge of 'hiding' the words of God, made against the Jews and Christians. It is there written,

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تَلْبِسُونَ الْحَقَّ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتَكْتُمُونَ
الْحَقَّ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

'O People of the Book! why clothe ye the signs of God with falsehood? Why wittingly hide the truth?' What can this passage mean but corruption of the Taurát and Injíl? In this verse the Jews and Christians are not only accused of 'clothing

the truth with falsehood', that is of adding false stories and doctrines to the word of God, but they are also accused of 'hiding', in other words, of cutting out certain passages from the Taurát and Injíl. How, then, can these Christian missionaries affirm that those Scriptures have not been corrupted? and how dare they urge Muslims to study them?

Yet another proof that the Taurát and Injíl have been corrupted by Jews and Christians is furnished by the words of Súratu 'Alí 'Imrán (iii) 72. It is there distinctly stated that

وَلِنْ مِنْهُمْ لَفَرِيقًا يَلُونِ السِّتْرَ بِالْكِتَابِ لِتَحْسَبُوهُ مِنَ
الْكِتَابِ وَمَا هُوَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَقُولُونَ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ
وَمَا هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ

'Verily some are there among them who torture the Scriptures with their tongues in order that ye may suppose it to be from the Scripture, yet it is not from the Scripture and say "this is from God," yet it is not from God.' 'This passage', continued the maulaví, 'is one of the clearest in the noble Qur'án which proves that the Taurát and Injíl have been corrupted by the people of the Book, for it asserts that certain passages which they affirmed were from God, that is, were a part of the Scriptures, were really not a part of the Scriptures at all. Surely this verse refers to the false stories about the alleged death of the Prophet 'Isá, upon whom be the peace and blessing of God, upon the cross. Such stories are false we know, because the noble Qur'án tells us that.

he was taken up alive into heaven. It is to this, then, the passage refers when it speaks of the people of the Book torturing the Scriptures with their tongues.'

As the maulaví paused in his recital, there arose a perfect storm of applause from the assembled multitude, and shouts of 'Alláh Akbar' again rent the air. As they did so Ghulám's heart sank within him. The passages of the Qur'án which the maulaví had just quoted seemed to afford incontrovertible proof of the corruption of the Christian Scriptures, and they left the young student lost in a maze of perplexity and doubt. It seemed to him as if, in a few short moments, his newly-found belief in the integrity of the Taurát and Injíl had been shattered to pieces, and he gazed with a look of helpless entreaty at the face of the Christian missionary as the latter sat silently waiting for the maulaví to resume his speech. Ghulám detected no trace of either anger or anxiety upon the face of Mr. Williams; on the contrary the latter's calm, unruffled features brought him a certain amount of relief, and he once more settled himself to listen as the maulaví again began to speak.

'There is no need to multiply quotations,' the latter began, 'those I have already given are amply sufficient to prove what I undertook to prove in this meeting, but I shall, by way of emphasis, bring forward one or two more verses of the noble Qur'án before I sit down, and first let me read you the 48th verse of Súratu'n-Nisá' (iv).

مِنَ الَّذِينَ هَادُوا يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَوَاضِعِهِ

'And of those who are Jews there are those who pervert the words from their places.' Here again we

have clear proof of the corruption of the Jewish Scriptures. It is this very perversion of which we Muslims complain, and by reason of which we steadfastly refuse to read the Taurát or consider its claims. How in the face of such statements of the Holy Qur'án these Christian missionaries can maintain that that book proves the integrity of the Taurát and Injíl passes my comprehension, and, so, after bringing forward one more quotation, I shall gladly resume my seat in order to hear what the foreigner has to say in reply.

'My last quotation,' continued the maulaví, 'is from Súratu'l-Má'ida (v) 14.

It reads thus:—

يَحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَوَاضِعِهِ وَنَسُوا حَظًّا مِمَّا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ

'They perverted the words from their places, and forgot a portion of that which they were reminded of.' Here, again, we are distinctly told that the Jews 'perverted,' the words of the Taurát from their places, in other words, corrupted the text of the Taurát. Not only so, but the Qur'án says that they 'forgot' portions of the Scriptures altogether. How, then, can good Muslims be expected to believe in and study Scriptures which have been so shamefully treated? No! the noble Qur'án is sufficient for us; for God has protected it from all change, and only by following its holy precepts can we attain to the joys of paradise.'

So saying, Maulaví Ibráhím 'Alí resumed his seat midst a storm of applause, which only moderated when the chairman stood up and thus addressed the gathering: 'Muslim brethren! You have heard the learned address

of Maulaví Ibráhím. He promised to prove from the pages of the noble Qur'án that the Taurát and Injíl have been corrupted by Jews and Christians, and we all agree, I am sure, that he has amply fulfilled his promise. Speaking for myself I must say that I had no conception that there were so many references in the noble Qur'án to the corruption of the Christian Scriptures. The maulaví deserves our grateful thanks for making the matter so clear, and for confirming us in our own holy religion. We must not forget, however, that this is a public discussion between Maulaví Ibráhím and the Christian missionary, Mr. Williams, and, according to the terms of the agreement made respecting this meeting, the latter now has the right to address the assembly. In now calling upon the Christian priest to make his reply, I can only express the hope that you will all behave like gentlemen, and give the speaker a fair and respectful hearing. I am told that the missionary is an Arabic scholar, and has visited Cairo, Damascus and other great Muslim cities. He, therefore, is entitled to our respect, and, on your behalf, I now call upon him to address the meeting.'

A low murmur went round the assembly as the missionary rose to reply, but it soon died away into silence as he began to speak thus: 'Mr. Chairman and Muslim friends', he began, 'I must, first of all, thank you very heartily for inviting me to be present at this great assembly in order to reply to the remarks made by Maulaví Ibráhím 'Alí with regard to the Taurát and Injíl. By the terms of the agreement made with the maulaví I am debarred from bringing forward, at this time, the most convincing proofs of the integrity of those

holy Books drawn from history and literature, and must confine myself to observations regarding the testimony of the Qur'án to their authenticity and integrity. In doing this it must not be inferred that I thereby acknowledge the Qur'án to be the word of God, or that I am even prepared to accept it as a reliable guide in the important matter of deciding whether we should study and follow the teaching of the Taurát and Injíl. All I desire to show here this morning is that the Qur'án does not teach that the text of the Taurát and Injíl has been corrupted in the manner which many modern Muslims affirm, and that, therefore, their refusal to read those divine Books, based upon any such belief, is both unreasonable and foolish. My reading of the Qur'án has been very thorough, and I am bound to say that I have found no passage which states that the text of the Taurát and Injíl has been altered by either Jews or Christians. On the contrary, there are many passages in the Qur'án which make it clear that those Books have not been altered in the way alleged.

'Maulaví Ibráhím has quoted several passages from the Qur'án which, he says, prove that the Taurát and Injíl have been corrupted, but he must know that his mere affirmation is not enough in such a case. We must ask what meaning was put upon such passages by Muhammad himself and by his early followers. The ancient commentators of the Qur'án cannot be ignored in such a case. It is fair, I think, to assume that Maulaví Ibráhím has quoted the strongest passages which he could find in support of his contention, consequently if I can show that, with regard to every passage which he quotes, the ancient commentators affirm that

only corruption of the meaning is meant, then it will be safe to assume that those other passages of the same nature which, he says, are to be found in the Qur'án, have the same meaning. At any rate I am quite prepared to discuss any further quotations which the maulaví may care to make when he addresses you for a second time. Learned Muslims speak of two kinds of corruption—corruption of the text, which they call *taḥrifu'l-lafẓi*; and corruption of the meaning, which they call *taḥrifu'l-ma'nawí*? It is failure to distinguish between these two kinds of corruption which has led Maulaví Ibráhím to imagine that the Qur'án accuses the Jews and Christians of altering their Scriptures. The fact is, as I shall now prove, the Qur'án nowhere suggests that those people had altered the text of the Taurát or Injíl, but it again and again accuses them of giving false interpretations of its meaning. We know how, even in our own day, some men, either from ignorance or wickedness, such as the late Ghulám Aḥmad of Qádián in the Punjab, twist the obvious meaning of the Qur'án, but we also know how absolutely impossible it would be for such persons to alter the text of the Qur'án—unless, indeed, they could first persuade all the other Muslims of the world to alter their copies of the Qur'án as well! Let us now turn to the passages referred to by the maulaví. The first is the seventieth verse of Súratu'l-Baqara, and reads thus; 'Desire ye then that for your sakes *the Jews* should believe? Yet a party of them heard the word of God, and then, after they had understood it, perverted it, and knew that they did.' The maulaví brings forward this verse of the Qur'án to prove that the Jews and Christians had corrupted the Taurát and Injíl, but if he had taken the

trouble to consult the great Muḥammadan commentators of the Qur'án before he came here this morning, he would have learned that the true meaning of the passage which he has quoted is simply that the Jews altered the *meaning* of the words they heard. Thus Baidáwí, after quoting various opinions of the commentators, says in his famous commentary, that the words mean *فيفسرونه بما يشتهون* 'They interpret it according to what they desire'. In other words, the 'corruption' referred to is in the meaning assigned to the word of God, and not to the text itself. There is absolutely no suggestion that the Jews altered the words of the Taurát. On the contrary, the great Muslim leader in India Sir Syed Aḥmed Khán in his *Mohomedan Commentary on the Holy Bible*, page 79, referring to this very passage, says: 'The clause "heard the word of God and then, after they had understood it, perverted it", shows that the change was only verbal in reading; not that the written words of the text were changed?' Thus we see that the passage quoted by the maulaví proves nothing more than that certain Jews were wont to attribute false meanings to certain passages of the Taurát. In the *Tafsir-i-Durr-i-Manthúr* it is recorded that

واخراج ابن المنذر وابن ابي حاتم عن وهب ابن
منبه قال ان التوراة والانجيل كما انزلهما الله لم يغير منهما
حرف واكنهم يضلون با تحريف والتاويل والكتب كانوا
يكتبونها من عند انفسهم ويقولون هو من عند الله وما
هو من عند الله فاما كتب الله فانها محفوظة لا تتحول

'It is related by Ibnu'l-mandhar and Ibn Abí Hátim from Wahab ibn Mumba that not a letter has been altered of the Taurát and Injíl from that which was sent down by God; but they (the Jews) used to lead people astray by changing and altering the meaning. They used also to write books from themselves and then say, "it is from God"; when they were not from God. But the (real) books of God were protected from change, and had not been altered.' One is not surprised to be told that the Jews used to alter the meaning of the Taurát by false exegesis, for to this very day they misinterpret the many prophecies of that book concerning the Prophet 'Isá, and refuse to believe in him as a Prophet sent from God. They do not, however, dare to alter the actual words of those prophecies. Now, as then, they confine themselves to false exegesis of the word of God.

The great Bukhárí gives us an indication of the manner in which the Jews used to mislead the Muslims in their interpretation of the Taurát, for on page 84 of the third volume of his great collection of traditions he tells us that

روى ابو هريرة قال كان اهل الكتاب يقرأون التوراة
بالعبرانية ويفسرونها بالعربية لاهل الاسلام

'There is a tradition from Abú Huraira that he said, The people of the book used to read the Taurát in Hebrew, and explain it to the people of Islám in Arabic.' Obviously, therefore, according to Abú Huraira, it would be a comparatively easy task for the Jews to mislead their ignorant hearers, and make them believe

that the contents of the Taurát were very different from what they actually were. It is undoubtedly to this that the Qur'án refers when it accuses the Jews of altering the Taurát.

The second passage quoted by Maulaví Ibráhím 'Alí is also found in Súratu'l-Baqara (ii) 154 and reads thus: 'Those who conceal aught that we have sent down either of clear proof or of guidance, after what we have so clearly shown to men in the Book, God shall curse them, and they who curse shall curse them.' The 'concealing' referred to in the verse quoted by the maulaví is taken by him to mean corruption of the text of the word of God. In fact, he would have us believe that it refers to the cutting out by Jews and Christians of certain passages of the Taurát and Injíl which referred to the coming of the Prophet Muḥammad. Far from that being the case, however, a reference to the great Muslim commentaries of the Qur'án makes it clear that this verse, like the one quoted previously, furnishes an example of Tahrifu'l-ma'nawí, and has no reference whatever to any alteration of the actual words of Scripture. Thus the great Muslim scholar and famous exegete Fakhru'd-dín Rází says in his commentary, called *al-Kabír* that

قال ابن عباس ان جماعة من الانصار سئلوا نفروا من
اليهود عما في التوراة من صفته صلى الله عليه وسلم ومن
الاحكام فكتموا فنزلت الاية

'Ibn 'Abbás said that a band of the Helpers (Anṣār) asked a company of Jews as to what was in the Taurát concerning the coming of the Prophet, on whom be the

peace and blessing of God, and concerning certain commands, but they concealed the matter; and then was sent down this verse.' The same explanation of the passage is given by Ibn Hishám in his *Life of the Prophet*. There it is stated that certain people,

سأل اليهود عن بعض ما في التوراة فاكتموا إياهم وأبوا
أن يخبروهم عنه فانزل الله عز وجل أن الذين يكتمون

'Asked the Jews concerning certain things which were in the Taurát, but they hid them, and refused to inform them of the matter. Then the glorious God sent down the words "Verily those who conceal"', etc. As a matter of fact this 'concealing' of the truth by the Jews is referred to more than once in the Qur'án, but nowhere does it mean that they altered or cut out the actual words of Scripture. Here is a remarkable confirmation of what I am saying, continued the missionary, as he took up a large Arabic volume from the table before him. This is the celebrated *Mishkátu'l-Maṣābiḥ* in which the most important traditions collected by Bukhárí and Muslím are to be found. Here in this section entitled Kitábu'l-Hadúd is a tradition which throws a flood of light upon these verses of the Qur'án in which the charge of 'concealing' the word of God is made. It is as follows:—

و عن عبد الله بن عمر أن اليهود جاءوا إلى رسول الله
صلي الله عليه وسلم فذكروا له أن رجل منهم وامرأة زينا
فقال لهم رسول الله صلي الله عليه وسلم ما تجدون في
التوراة في شأن الرجم قالوا تفصيحهم وتجلدهم قال عبد الله

بن سلام كذبتهم أن فيها الرجم فاتوا بالتوراة فنشروها فوضع
أحدهم يده على آية الرجم فقرأ ما قبلها وما بعدها فقال
عبد الله بن سلام أرفع يدك فرفع فإذا فيها آية الرجم
فقالوا صدق يا محمد فيها آية الرجم فأمر بهما النبي صلي
الله عليه وسلم فرجما

'And from 'Abdu'lláh bin 'Umar (it is related) that the Jews came to the Prophet of God, on whom be the peace and blessing of God, and informed him that a man and a woman of the Jews had committed adultery. The apostle of God said to them, "What do you find in the Taurát in the matter of stoning (adulterers)." They said: "(it is written), disgrace them and whip them". 'Abdu'lláh bin Salám replied: "You lie. Verily the command to stone them is found in it". Then they brought the Taurát and opened it; but one of them (i.e. one of the Jews) placed his hand over the verse of stoning and read what preceded and what followed it. But 'Abdu'lláh bin Salám said: "Lift up your hand." Then he raised his hand, and lo! in the Taurát was the verse of stoning. Then they said: "He has spoken truly, O Muḥammad, in it is the verse of stoning." Then the Prophet of God, on whom be the peace and blessing of God, commanded that they should both be stoned, and they were so.' This tradition affords an interesting example of the way in which the Jews used to 'conceal' the word of God, and it is noteworthy that both in the *Tafsíru'l-Qádiri*, p. 39, and the *Tafsíru'r-Raufi*, p. 135, it is stated that the verse of the Qur'án quoted by Maulaví Ibráhím with regard to 'concealing' the word

of God refers to the question of the stoning of adulterers. As a matter of fact the verse of stoning remains in the Taurát up to the present day, and may be seen in the twenty-second chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy. Thus what we have said is sufficient to show the baselessness of the maulaví's assertion that the charge of 'hiding' the word of God refers to the corruption of the actual text of Scripture; and so we pass on to an examination of the remaining verses quoted by him.

'The next verse quoted by the maulaví is Súratu Áli 'Imrán (iii) 64, and runs as follows: "O People of the Book! why clothe ye the truth with falsehood?" Why wittingly hide the truth?' The Muslim apologist asks us to believe that this verse proves the corruption of the Taurát and Injíl by Jews and Christians, but a reference, as before, to the works of the great Muslim commentators proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that there is no allusion whatever here to Tahrífu'l-lafẓí, or corruption of the words of Scripture. The occasion of the utterance of the words quoted is recorded by Ibn Hishám in his *Life of the Prophet*, and is as follows:—

قال عبد الله بن ضعيف وعدي بن زيد والحارث بن عوف بعضهم لبعض تعالوا نؤمن بما انزل على محمد واصحابه عدوة ونكفر به عشية حتي نلبس عليهم دينهم لعلمهم يصنعون كما صنع فيرجعون عن دينهم فانزل الله عز وجل فيهم يا اهل الكتاب لم تلبسون الحق بالباطل وتكتمون الحق وانتم تعلمون

'Abdu'lláh. bin Da'if, 'Adí bin Zaid and al-Háarith bin 'Anf spoke together thus. Come! let us in the morning

believe in what has been sent down upon Muḥammad and his companions, and let us disbelieve it in the evening in order that we may confuse their religion for them, and that they may act in like manner as ourselves, and turn back from their religion. Then sent down the glorious God concerning them the words, 'O People of the Book! why clothe ye the truth with falsehood? Why wittingly hide the truth?' From the words of Ibn Hishám it is clear that the reference in this verse of the Qur'án is to certain lying Jews who, in order to lead the Muslims from their faith, pretended in the morning to believe in Muḥammad and the Qur'án, 'hiding' the truth of the matter, and 'clothing' with falsehood their real intentions, but openly avowing their disbelief in him in the evening. Here, again, we see that there is not even the implication that the Jews tampered with the actual words of the Scriptures; and the maulaví must be hard pressed indeed for arguments, when he has to quote such a passage to prove the corruption of the Taurát and Injíl.

'Yet another verse quoted by Maulaví Ibráhím is Súratu Áli 'Imrán (iii) 72. It reads as follows: 'And some truly are there among them who torture the Scriptures with their tongues, in order that ye may suppose it to be from the Scripture, yet it is not from the Scripture. They say, "it is from God", yet it is not from God.' The maulaví claims this verse of the Qur'án as one of the clearest proofs of the corruption of the Taurát and Injíl. If that be so, then I am afraid he has lamentably failed to prove his case, because the great commentators of the Qur'án candidly admit that there is no hint even of Tahrífu'l-lafẓí in this passage. All that is said in the

verse in question is that certain Jews, at the time of reading the Taurát, introduced into their reading words and phrases which had no existence in the written passages before them. They assured their Arab hearers that these creations of their own imagination were part of the word of God which lay open before them. Let me again quote the learned Syed Ahmed Khán. On page 77 of his *Mohomedan Commentary on the Holy Bible* he says: 'This verse shows that the Scripture readers were in the habit of substituting words of their own for those of the text, but it does not show that there was any tampering with the written text itself.' The great commentator 'Abbás says in his comment on this verse:—

يقولون على الله الكذب وهم يعلمون انه ليس ذلك
في كتابهم

'They speak lies against God, and they know that what they say is not in their book.' Where, then, is the Tahrífu'l-lafzi in this passage? Is it not clear that Maulaví Ibráhím, without trying to understand the passage, has jumped to certain conclusions which are quite contrary to the true meaning. The great scholar 'Abbás makes it clear in his comment that certain Jews were in the habit of falsely adding to their reading of the Taurát certain words and phrases which were not in the book at all which lay open before them. The phrase 'torture with their tongues', far, then, from being a proof that the Taurát and Injíl have been corrupted, rather shows that the altering took place in the course of the verbal repetition of the Taurát, and not in the text itself.

'The maulaví also quoted Súratu'n-Nisá' (iv) 48 in support of his charge that the Taurát and Injíl had been corrupted. The passage is as follows: 'Among the Jews are those who pervert the words from their places.' The maulaví expresses surprise and indignation that we Christian missionaries should continue to urge our Muḥammadan brethren to read the Taurát and Injíl whilst passages such as this remain in the Qur'án. Muslím, he tells us, steadfastly refuse to consider the claims of those books so long as such passages exist to prove their corruption. In reply, I can only express my surprise and sorrow that a man of such learning and ability as Maulaví Ibráhím 'Alí should talk thus without first enquiring as to the real meaning of the verse he quotes; for if he had done so, he would have found that the words used in this verse refer to the words of Muḥammad himself, and not to those of the Taurát at all! If the maulaví had taken the trouble to read the words of the Qur'án which follow this verse, he would have been saved from his foolish mistake, for there it is made clear that the Jews used certain words of the Muslím with a bad meaning in order to vex and dishonour the Prophet, and this is the 'perversion' referred to in the text. The whole passage will make this clear. It is as follows: 'Among the Jews are those who pervert the words from their places, and say: "We have heard and we have obeyed. Hear thou, but as one that heareth not; and 'Look at us' (رَاعِنَا—Rá'iná)" perplexing with their tongues, and wounding the Faith by their revilings'. Here we see that the simple context of the passage, quite apart from the explanations of the commentators, amply suffices to show that there is no mention whatever

ever of the Taurāt in the verse. And yet Maulavī Ibrāhīm bases his refusal to read the Taurāt on such passages.

'Before I close my remarks I will read to you the words of one or two Muslim exegetes from these books on the table before me. Here is the work of the great Muslim commentator Jalālu'd-dīn. He tells us that, in order to ridicule Muḥammad, some of the Jews used to alter certain salutations current amongst the people. For example, they used to come to the Prophet, he tells us, and instead of saying السلام عليك 'peace be on thee,' they used to say, اسام عليك 'may disaster overtake thee!' Imām Fakhrū'd-dīn Rāzī says that the passage refers to the fact that the Jews used to come to Muḥammad and ask him certain questions, but, after taking their leave of him, they used to alter the words he had taught them. With regard to the word Rā'inā, which the Prophet had taught his followers, 'Abdu'l-Qādir says that:—

یہ لفظ یہودیوں کی زبان میں بُری بات تھی یا گالی
تھی مسلمانوں کو دیکھ کر یہودی بھی معنی بد اپنے دل
میں رکھ کر حضرت کو کہتے کہ راعنا اس واسطے مسلمان کو
حکم ہوا کہ لفظ راعنا نہ کہو

'This word (Rā'inā) was a bad word in the Jews' language or was abuse. Seeing the Muslims the Jews also, keeping the bad meaning in their minds, used to address the Prophet by the word Rā'inā. For this reason the Muslims were commanded not to use the word Rā'inā.'

'In the *Tafsīru'l-Qādiri*, p. 168, it is explained that,

یہود راعنا کے عین کے زیر کو پڑھا کر راعینا کہتے تھے یعنی
ای ہمارے چرواہا یعنی آن حضرت صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم
پر گائی بکری چرانے کے ساتھ طعن اور تعیض کرتے تھے

'The Jews lengthening the letter 'ain (e) of the word Rā'inā (look on us) pronounced it Rā'inā, that is, "O our shepherd". In other words, they addressed the Prophet of God, on whom be the peace and blessing of God, as a shepherd of cattle and goats, taunting and reproaching him.' It is also said in the same *Tafsīr* that the meaning of the passage is that God addressing Muḥammad, said:—

ای میرے حبیب تیرے دشمن یہود تیری باتیں اپنے
مسئل اور موقع سے بدل دالتے ہیں

'O, my beloved, thy enemies the Jews are changing thy words from their places.' From what has been said by the commentators, as well as from the context of the verse it is clear, therefore, that Maulavī Ibrāhīm has totally failed to understand the meaning of the passage which he quoted. That being so, his refusal to read and obey the Taurāt and Injīl is void of any foundation.

'The last verse of the Qur'ān quoted by the maulavī to prove that the Taurāt and Injīl have been corrupted is Sūratu'l-Mā'ida (v) 16. It is as follows: "They shift the words of Scripture from their places, and have forgotten part of what they were taught." Imām Rāzī says in his *Tafsīru'l-Kabīr* that these words refer to the command of the Taurāt to stone adulterers. But, as I have

already shown, that command is still standing in the Taurát, so that it is clear from the words of Imám Fakhrú'd-din-Rázi that the "shifting" here alluded to was verbal only, and did not refer to the actual written words of the Scripture. This is exactly what Syed Ahmed Khán has said in his famous *Mohomedan Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p. 79. He there writes 'The words, "forgotten what they were taught," is to be understood as implying that the people perverted the meaning of Scripture, and not that they mutilated the text.'

'This completes my discussion of the passages of the Qur'án, quoted by Maulaví Ibráhím 'Alí to prove the corruption of the Taurát and Injíl, and in view of the great authorities whom I have quoted, I think you will agree with me, gentlemen, that he has quite failed to prove anything of the sort. Not one of the verses quoted by him has anything to do with the corruption of the text of the Bible. At most they refer to changes made in the explanation of the Scriptures, or to the hiding of the truth from Muslims and others.

'One thing is certain. If the Taurát and Injíl had been corrupted in the way some Muslims pretend, it is certain that Muḥammad would have warned the people against those books; but, far from that being the case, we find the Qur'án commanding Jews and Christians in the strongest terms to study and obey these very Scriptures. Thus in Súratu'l-Má'ida (v) 72 it is written:—

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَسْتُمْ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ تُقِيمُوا الدِّينَ
وَالْأَنْبِيَاءَ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ

'O, People of the Book! ye have no ground to stand on until ye observe the Taurát and Injíl and that which has been sent down to you from your Lord.' The words 'Ye observe' are explained in the *Tafsíru'l-Qádiri*, p. 236, to mean *يعني اوبير عمل کرتے* 'that is, act according to them.' So we see the Qur'án urges Jews and Christians in the strongest terms, to follow and obey the Taurát and Injíl. This verse alone is sufficient to prove that the Jewish and Christian Scriptures have not been corrupted; for who would tell men to obey a corrupted Gospel? The maulaví has apparently forgotten the

words of the Qur'án: *لَا مَبْدَلَ كَلِمَاتِ اللَّهِ* 'There is none who can change the words of God,' and he fails to see that, in accusing the Taurát and Injíl of being corrupted, he is giving a blank denial to one of the clear statements of his own Qur'án! No! my friends, the Taurát and Injíl have not been corrupted. They are still, as the Qur'án teaches, 'a light and guidance for men,' and I conclude these imperfect remarks by entreating you to study for yourselves those wonderful books which the Qur'án again and again calls the 'word of God!'

As the missionary resumed his seat a low murmur of excited comment rose through the assembly, which, had not the chairman quickly risen to his feet, would soon have degenerated into an unseemly squabble. For there were not a few in the audience that December morning who had, long since, become dissatisfied with the supercilious and scornful attitude which the maulaví consistently adopted towards them, and who now rejoiced, in

spite of their religious prejudices, at his obvious discomfiture. On the other hand, there were still more who, blinded by prejudice and ignorance, saw in the missionary's words a distinct attack upon their faith, and resented all the more, because they were unable to answer him, the arguments drawn from their own religious literature with which he had so conspicuously silenced the maulaví. But the chairman was on his feet, and the murmurs died away into silence as he began to address the great audience. 'Muslim brethren' he said: 'you have heard the reply of the missionary, and I shall not stand long between you and the maulaví, who is doubtless anxious to reply to the arguments which have been so ably put before you by the sahib. But one thing I must say before I sit down, and it is this: like many others here this morning, I have been astonished at the knowledge which this foreigner possesses both of our religion and our literature. Whatever we may think of his arguments—and I confess I wait with no little eagerness to hear our maulaví's reply—we must at least pay the tribute of respect to his learning and eloquence. His knowledge of Islám and of the Arabic language is only equalled by his perfect command of our own Bengali tongue. It has been a pleasure to listen to him, although, as a good Muslim, I could have wished that his address had dealt with some other topic. However, we are all eager to hear what Ibrahim maulaví has to say in reply, and so, without further delay, I will now ask him to again address you'.

There was a dead silence as the Muslim champion rose to his feet, and expectancy, mingled with fear, was written deeply upon the faces of many in the great

audience. Could the Muslim meet the arguments of the Christian? Would he be able to show that, after all, it was textual corruption of the Christian Scriptures to which the Qur'án referred? Such were the questions which rose unbidden to the lips of many, and the excitement of the audience rose to fever pitch as the maulaví

began to speak. **لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَ مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُولُ اللَّهِ** 'There is no God but Alláh, and Muḥammad is the Apostle of God'; **أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ النَّاسِ** 'I betake me for refuge with the Lord of men,'¹ he cried, as he looked out over the mass of human beings seated before him. 'O, true believers say,

هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ أَمْ يُلِدُ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ

'He is God alone! God the Eternal! He begetteth not, and He is not begotten, and there is none like unto Him': O, Muḥammadan brethren, these Christians call the Prophet 'Isá, on whom be the peace and blessing of God, the son of God, but far be it from Him that He should have a son. They also falsely teach that the Prophet 'Isá, on whom be the peace and blessing of God, died upon the cross as an atonement for the sins of men. How, then, can such people be accepted as guides and teachers in matters affecting our holy Qur'án?' It matters not to me whether this Christian can prove that the corruption of the Taurát and Injíl referred to in our holy Book is only corruption of the meaning, and I shall not waste my time this morning by dealing

¹ Súratu'n-Nás (cxiv).

² Súratu'l-Akhlás (cxii) 1-4.

further with that point. It really is not important; for even if it could be proved that no alteration has taken place in the written words of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, yet we all know that by the descent of the noble Qur'án those Scriptures have been abrogated. Consequently they are no longer to be studied or obeyed. The noble Qur'án is clear on this point, and I shall, therefore, content myself with quoting one or two passages to that effect. The first passage to which I would call your attention is Súratu'l-Baqara (ii) 100. It is there written :—

مَا نَنْسَخْ مِنْ آيَةٍ أَوْ نُنسِهَا نَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ مِنْهَا أَوْ مِثْلَهَا

'Whatever verses we may annul or cause (thee) to forget, we will bring a better one or its like'. Here, then, is my answer to the Christian priest. Why should we busy ourselves over questions of corruption when it is so clearly stated in the noble Qur'án that the 'better' verses of that Book have abrogated the preceding Scriptures? This verse alone furnishes a sufficient answer to the laboured arguments of the Christian priest; for when it is so clearly stated that God would abrogate the former Scriptures of the Jews and Christians, and cause men to forget them, then it is evident that He does not intend that men should read, much less obey, them. I am surprised that the Christian priest, with all his knowledge of the Qur'án, does not know of the presence of this verse in that Book. Is it that he is wilfully concealing that knowledge? At any rate, this is my answer, and until it can be shown that the Qur'án has not abrogated the Taurát and Injíl I decline to consider the

matter further. I would, in passing, remind the missionary that it is a matter of common experience that when an earthly monarch dies his successor not infrequently abrogates the laws his predecessor had made, and introduces others more suited to the new circumstances and times. So it is with religion. At the time of the Prophet Moses, upon whom be the peace and blessing of God, the laws of the Taurát were in force, but when the Prophet David was born the Zabúr became the rule of faith and practice. Later, with the advent of the Prophet 'Isá, the Injíl became current, and the preceding dispensations were abrogated. So, in like manner, when the Prophet of God, on whom be the peace and blessing of God, began to preach the holy doctrines of Islám, then the Qur'án was sent down to abrogate the former religions and Scriptures. Consequently the Qur'án is now alone the standard by which men must shape their actions, and its precepts alone are able to guide them to the joys of Paradise.

'There is, in addition to the passage I have just quoted, another in Súratu'n-Nahl (xvi) 103, which teaches the same thing. It runs as follows :—

وَإِذَا بَدَّلْنَا آيَةً مَكَانَ آيَةٍ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَنْزِلُ

'And when we change one verse for another, and God knoweth best what he revealeth.' Here, again, it is clearly stated that God abrogates one Scripture in favour of another which follows it, so that there can be no doubt whatever that both the Taurát and the Injíl have been abrogated by the noble Qur'án. There is little need for me to say more. The holy religion of Islám is

the last and perfect religion, just as Muḥammad, the Apostle of God, on whom be the peace and blessing of God, is the seal of the Prophets and the great Intercessor at the day of judgement. Let no Muslím, therefore, be led astray by the words of the Christian missionary, for 'whosoever craves other than Islám for a religion, it shall surely not be accepted from him, and in the next world he shall be among the lost.'¹

There was a moment's silence as the maulaví resumed his seat, and, then, something like a sigh of relief rose from the lips of the assembled Muslím. Few of the latter were educated men, and fewer still were keen enough to see that the maulaví, in attempting to turn the argument into another channel, was not only begging the question which had brought them together, but, in so doing, was acknowledging in a very real manner his own inability to answer the arguments of the missionary. The crowd, therefore, was perfectly satisfied with the new position its champion had taken up, and was quite persuaded that his words constituted a sufficient reply to all that had been advanced by the missionary in support of the integrity of the Taurát and Injíl. Not a few of those present, however, were eager to know how the Christian would meet this new attack upon his faith, and attention was once more strained as the latter again rose in answer to the Chairman's invitation.

'I am surprised and disappointed, he said, at the reply of Maulaví Ibrahím, which, as a matter of fact, is no reply at all; for he made no attempt to answer my contention that wherever in the Qur'án the corruption

¹ Súratu Áli 'Imrán (iii) 79.

of the Taurát and Injíl is referred to, the reference is only and always to corruption of the meaning by false interpretation, and never to corruption of the text. Under these circumstances it would be perfectly legitimate for me to refuse to take cognizance of the new argument now advanced by the maulaví, until he attempts some more satisfactory reply to my previous argument; but for the sake of the many Muslím present, as well as for the sake of the truth itself, I will waive that objection, and proceed to show that the maulaví is as mistaken in his judgement regarding the question of the abrogation of the Christian Scriptures as he is with regard to that of their corruption.

'The maulaví declares that the Jewish and Christian Scriptures have been abrogated by the Qur'án, and that, therefore, it is no longer incumbent upon men to study those books. He bases his view upon two passages of the Qur'án, which, he affirms, teach most clearly that the Taurát and Injíl have been completely annulled by the Qur'án, so that the latter book is now the only guide to faith and practice. I will deal, first of all, with the passages quoted by the maulaví, and will then pass to a few observations, largely based upon the Qur'án, with regard to the question of abrogation in general.

'The maulaví refers, first of all, to Súratu'l-Baqara (ii) 100. The verse reads as follows: 'Whatever verse we may annul or cause (thee) to forget, we will bring a better or its like'. The maulaví affirms that this verse proves the abrogation of the Taurát and Injíl by the Qur'án, and, taking his stand upon this arbitrary conclusion, he refuses either to obey or read the Scriptures which preceded the Qur'án. My reply is this: the

maulaví is either grossly ignorant, or perversely deceitful in the position which he takes up, for the great Muḥammadan commentators of the Qur'án are unanimous in affirming that the passage quoted by the maulaví refers, not to the alleged abrogated verses of the Taurát and Injíl, but to those verses of the Qur'án itself—and the commentators say they number no less than two hundred and twenty-five—which have been abrogated by later verses of the Qur'án. The question, then, resolves itself into one of the comparative authority of Maulaví Ibráhím on the one hand, and the great Muslím commentators of the Qur'án on the other—commentators, let me remind you—whose views are invariably based upon the utterances of Muḥammad himself or of the Companions (aṣḥáb), as they have been preserved to us in the traditions. Let me, then, read to you the comments of some of these great scholars of Islám on the passage quoted by the maulaví. Here is what the two Jaláls say in the *Tafsiṛu'l-Jalálain*, with regard to the verse,

ولم طعن الكفار في النسيخ وقالوا ان محمد يامر اصحابه
اليوم بامر وينهى عنه غدا فنزل ما نسيخ

'and when the unbelievers taunted (Muḥammad) concerning abrogation, and said, verily Muḥammad commands his companions a certain thing to-day and forbids it to-morrow, then came down the words, "Whatever we annul, etc." With regard to the words "Cause (thee) to forget," the same commentators say, *اي ننسكها*, "that is, will cause thee (O Muḥammad) to forget it, and will blot it out of thy heart."

From these words of the great commentators, the Jalálain, it is clear that the words of the text refer, not to the Taurát and Injíl at all, but to the words of Muḥammad himself. God, moreover, would, according to the same authorities, cause Muḥammad to forget what had previously been revealed to him. The whole matter, as explained by the Jalálain, is perfectly easy of comprehension. Muḥammad, more than once, had occasion to reverse certain commands and prohibitions which he had laid upon his followers with regard to Jihád, the Qibla and so on. These changes called down upon him the ridicule of the unbelievers in the language quoted by the Jalálain. In reply it is stated that God would bring a better verse than the one abrogated by him. This is the unanimous view of Muslím commentators, and I cannot but regret that Maulaví Ibráhím should make such baseless charges against the Christian Scriptures without first taking the trouble to enquire as to the real meaning of the verse he quoted.

'Let me quote another leading commentator of the Qur'án, the great Qáḍí Baiḍáwí. On page twenty-two of his famous commentary he says:—

نزلت لما قال المشركون او اليهود الاترون الي محمد
يامر اصحابه بامر ثم ينهاهم عنه ويأمر بخلافه

'This (verse) came down when the idolaters or the Jews said, Do ye not see Muḥammad, he commands a certain thing to his followers, and afterwards forbids them concerning it, and commands them the very opposite.'

'In the *Tafsiṛu'l-Qáḍari* (p. 26), it is said that the passage means:—

جو کچھ منسوخ کر دیا ہم نے آیات قرآن سے لائے
ہمیں ہم بہتر اوس منسوخ کی ہوئی آیت سے جیسے
دس کافروں کے ساتھ ایک غازی کا مقابلہ منسوخ کر دیا
اور دو کافروں کے ساتھ مقرر کیا اور جیسے قبلہ کو
بیت المقدس سے کعبہ کی طرف پھیر دینا

'Whatever verse we abrogate from the Qur'án we will bring a better than such abrogated verse, as, for example, the command for one Muslím warrior (*Ghází*) to fight ten infidels was abrogated, and the command given for one *Ghází* to fight only two infidels; and as, for example, the changing of the Qibla from Jerusalem to the Ka'ba at Mecca.'

'In the *Tafsíru'r-Raufi*, (p. 114), it is said that the words mean:—

جو کچھ موقوف کرتے ہیں ہم آیتوں سے قرآن شریف کے

'Whatever we abrogate of the verses of the noble Qur'án.' After which the commentator enters into a long disquisition relating to the various kinds of abrogation which have taken place with regard to the Qur'án.

'In the well-known commentary of 'Abdu'l-Qádir (p. 17) we read, that the verse means:—

جو موقوف کرتے ہیں ہم کوئی آیت قرآن کی موافق
مصلحت وقت کے یا بھلا دیتے ہیں اس آیت کو داون
سے تو لاتے ہیں ہم یعنی بھیج دیتے ہیں ہم اس سے اچھی
جیسے کہ لڑائی میں اول حکم تھا کہ دس کافروں سے ایک

مسلمان لڑے پھر حکم ہوا کہ دو کافروں سے ایک مسلمان
لڑے یہ آسانی ہوئی مسلمانوں پر برابر اس کے آیت بھیجتے
ہمیں جیسے کہ پہلے حکم تھا کہ بیت المقدس کی طرف
سجدہ کرو پھر مکے کی طرف نماز کا حکم ہوا

'Whatever verse of the Qur'án we abrogate according to the exigences of the time or cause to forget from the heart, then we will bring, that is send, a better than it, as, for instance, at first, in war, the command was that one Muslím should fight ten infidels, afterwards the command was given that one Muslím should (only) fight two infidels, which was easier for the Muslíms. "We will send a verse equal to it", may be instanced by the command which at first existed to bow towards the holy temple at Jerusalem, whereas the command was afterwards given to say the prayers in the direction of Mecca.'

'I could go on repeating such quotations,' continued the missionary, 'but it is surely unnecessary to bring further evidence to show how hopelessly mistaken the maulaví is in affirming that the verse he has quoted has any reference to the Taurát and Injíl. From what I have said it must be perfectly clear to every one who is not blinded by prejudice and bigotry that the passage in question has reference only to the verses of the Qur'án.'

'The maulaví has quoted one other passage in support of his position. It is found in *Súratu'n-Nahl* (xvi) 103, and reads as follows: 'and when we change one verse for another, and God knoweth best what he revealeth.' This verse has exactly the same meaning as the one previously

discussed, i.e. it refers to certain verses of the Qur'ān which have been changed, that is abrogated, by others. The Muslim commentators of the Qur'ān are unanimous on this point; but Maulavī Ibrāhīm would have us believe that the passage teaches the substitution of the verses of the Qur'ān for those of the preceding Scripture. In order to show how opposed the maulavī is to the best Muslim commentators of the Qur'ān, I will quote the remarks of a few before resuming my seat.

'In the *Tafsīru'l-Jalālain* it is written that:—

قالوا اي الكفار للنبي صلي الله عليه وسلم انما انت
مفتر كذاب تقول من عندك بل اكثرهم لا
يعلمون حقيقت القرآن و فائدة النسخ

'They, that is the infidels, said to the Prophet, on whom be the peace and blessing of God, thou art only a forger, thou speakest (these things) from thyself; but most of them do not know the truth of the Qur'ān and the benefit of abrogation.' Is it not clear from this comment of the Jalālain that the Qur'ānic abrogation of one command by another called forth the derisive taunts of the unbelievers that the Prophet himself was the author of them!

'In the *Tafsīru'l-Baidāwī* (p. 366) the verse is explained thus:—

قالوا اي الكفرة انما انت مفتر منقول على الله تأمر
بشي ثم يبد ولك فتنبهي عنه

'They, that is the infidels, said, thou art only a forger against God, thou commandest something and after-

wards forbiddest it.' Qādī Baidāwī here makes it clear as noonday that the passage refers to the commands of the Qur'ān, and has nothing whatever to do with the Taurāt and Injīl. 'Abdu'l-Qādir and others give substantially the same explanation of the words quoted by the maulavī, and leave no manner of doubt that the words refer solely to the Qur'ān. Thus it is proved that in neither of the passages quoted by the maulavī is there the slightest foundation for the erroneous belief that the Taurāt and Injīl have been abrogated by the Qur'ān. On the contrary, there are many passages of the Qur'ān which make it abundantly clear that those books have not, and cannot be, abrogated in the way some ignorant Muslims imagine. For example, when dealing with the subject of the alleged corruption of the Taurāt and Injīl, I read a verse of the Qur'ān to you [Súratu'l-Má'ida (v) 72] in which the People of the Book were informed that they had no ground to stand on until they observed (i.e. obeyed) the Taurāt and Injīl. But it is inconceivable that God should command men to follow an abrogated Scripture. Thus this very passage alone furnishes undoubted proof that the Scriptures of the Jews and Christians have not been abrogated.

'Again, we are told in Súratu 'Alī 'Imrān (iii) 87 that on a certain occasion when Muḥammad became involved in an argument with some Jews concerning lawful and unlawful food he was told to say:—

فَاتَّوْا بِالتَّوْرَةِ فَاتْلَوْهَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

'Bring ye then the Taurāt and recite it, if ye be men of truth.' But surely it is inconceivable that the

Prophet should refer to an abrogated Scripture for a decision on disputed points. Surely his very action in calling for a reference to the Taurāt proves that that book had not been abrogated.

'Again, Muḥammad repeatedly described the Qur'ān as sent down *مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ* 'confirmatory of previous Scriptures'. [Súratu'l-Má'ida (v) 12]. Now the Qur'ān cannot both 'confirm' and 'abrogate' the same books, and since it is repeatedly stated in that book that it was sent to 'confirm' the previous Scriptures, it is surely presumption for any one to insist that it has abrogated them.

'Again, in the Qur'ān people are warned not to make any difference whatever between the different books of Scripture, and so we find in Súratu'l-Baqara (ii) 130 these words:—

قُولُوا آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْنَا
وَأَسْمِعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطَ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَى
وَعِيسَى وَمَا أُوتِيَ النَّبِيُّونَ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ
مِّنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ

Say ye: 'We believe in God, and that which hath been sent down to us, and that which hath been sent down to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and that which hath been given to Moses and to Jesus, and that which was given to the prophets from their Lord. No difference do we make between any of them; and to God are we resigned.' What greater

proof could you ask, my friends, than this, that the Taurāt and Injíl have not been abrogated? Here we find the distinct command, repeated, too, in other parts of the Qur'ān, to make no distinction whatever between the Qur'ān and the preceding Scriptures. All are alike from God, and all claim our faith and reverence. One cannot but marvel, in the face of such texts as these, at the temerity of men who so blindly denounce as abrogated what the Prophet described as being in exactly the same category as the Qur'ān! The fact is, there is not a single passage in the whole Qur'ān which states that the Qur'ān has abrogated the Taurāt and Injíl. So obvious is this fact that many learned Muslims have candidly admitted it, and affirmed their conviction that no abrogation of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures has taken place.

'Before I conclude my remarks,' continued the missionary, 'I will quote one or two Muslim scholars in support of what I have said. Commenting on the words of Súratu'l-Má'ida (v) 70, 'If they (the People of the Book) observe the Taurāt and the Injíl and what hath been sent down to them from their Lord, they shall surely have their fill of good things from above them and from beneath their feet', Muḥammad 'Abdu'l Hákim Khán in his *Commentary of the Qur'ān* (p. 213) says: 'Then how absurd is the opinion expressed so often by the Muḥammadans, and on their authority by Christians, that the holy Qur'ān abrogates the preceding Scriptures. Nowhere does the holy Qur'ān contain a single word that may express the abrogation of the Pentateuch or of the Gospel or of other Scriptures; but it repeatedly claims to be a confirmation of their teachings.

Abrogation it affirms of devilish inspiration only.' The honoured founder of Aligarh college, Sir Syed Ahmad Khán, says in his *Mohammedan Commentary on the Holy Bible*, (p. 268): 'Those who imagine it to be a part of the Muhammadan creed that one law has totally repealed another, are utterly mistaken, and we do not believe that the Zabúr (Book of Psalms) abrogated the Taurát (Pentateuch); that the Taurát in turn gave way to the Injíl (New Testament); and that the New Testament was suppressed by the Holy Qur'án. We hold no such doctrine, and if any ignorant Muhammadan should assert to the contrary, he simply knows nothing whatever about the doctrines and articles of his faith.'

'Another Muslim scholar, Shaikh Hájī Raḥmatu'lláh, says in his book the *Izháru'l-Haqq* that the opinion that the Taurát and Injíl have been abrogated by the Qur'án is only that of ignorant and uninstructed Muslims; and he continues on pages eleven and twelve of his book as follows:—

فقوله نسخ التوراة بنزول الزبور و نسخ الزبور بظهور الانجيل
بهتان لا اثر له في القرآن ولا في التفاسير بل لا اثر له في
كتاب من الكتب المعتمدة لاهل الاسلام والزبور عندنا
ليس بنسخ للتوراة ولا بمنسوخ من الانجيل و كان داود
عليه السلام علي شريعة موسي عليه السلام و كان الزبور ادعية

'The statement that the Taurát was abrogated by the Zabúr, and the Zabúr by the appearance of the Injíl is a falsehood of which there is no trace in the Qur'án or in the commentaries; nay, there is no trace of it in

any authoritative book belonging to the people of Islám. And in our opinion the Zabúr does not abrogate the Taurát, nor is it abrogated by the Injíl. David was subject to the religious law of Moses, and the Zabúr was (a collection of) prayers.' I commend the testimony of the three great Muslím I have quoted to the careful attention of Maulaví Ibráhím 'Alí before I pass on to one or two closing remarks.

'It only remains for me, in concluding, to entreat the maulaví, and every other Muslim in this great audience, to study carefully and earnestly the holy word of God as contained in the Taurát and Injíl. The theory of abrogation put forward by the maulaví has neither the support of the Qur'án nor of reason; for if we give the matter a moment's consideration, it will appear palpably evident that abrogation, even if its action on the previous Scriptures be admitted, can, at most, only apply to commands. History can never be abrogated, and the records of the life and claims of the Prophet 'Isá are as true to-day as when they were first preached by the fishermen of Galilee. The great Muslím scholar Jalálu'd-dín-Seyúti truly says in the Itqán (p. 22) لا يقع النسخ

المنسوخ الا في الامر والذمى 'abrogation only can take place in relation to commands and prohibitions.' Mazhari says the same, النسخ انما يعترض علي الا و امر والنواهي 'abrogation only happens in connexion with commands and prohibitions—never with facts.' That being so, is it not your highest wisdom, O, my Muslím brothers, to study the life and teachings of the Prophet 'Isá, whom you call the 'Word of God' and 'Spirit of

God'? Let me entreat you not to neglect so important a matter, for in that Injíl, which I have to-day proved to be neither corrupted nor abrogated, it is recorded that the Prophet 'Isá himself said, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me.'

There was a tense silence as the missionary ceased speaking, and men looked from one to another with something like amazement written upon their faces. Ismá'il Jabbár, the chairman, was visibly affected, and, without the semblance of a speech, abruptly dismissed the assembly. Then, after taking a hasty farewell of the Christian preacher, he sought the seclusion of his house. As he did so, the crowd melted away from the courtyard, only to gather outside, however, into excited knots of eager disputants. The words of the missionary had fallen like a thunderbolt into the midst of their complacency, and they began to realize for the first time in their lives that the call to consider the claims of the Christian Scriptures could not be set aside by the repetition of dull platitudes, repeated from their very childhood, about 'corruption' and 'abrogation'. Most of those present felt, even when not prepared to openly admit it, that the maulaví had been badly worsted in the discussion, and that they could no longer, with any show of reason, refuse the Christian invitation to study the Taurát and Injíl. Not a few of the more openminded amongst them did, indeed, secretly resolve to secure for themselves a copy of the Christian Scriptures, and before the missionary left for his distant home in Dhánpur he had sold a full dozen copies of the Injíl to those earnest seekers after truth.

CHAPTER VIII

COUNTING THE COST

GHULAM was overjoyed at the result of the discussion between the maulaví and Mr. Williams, and he seized the first opportunity to discuss the whole matter with his chum Emárat. The latter had now to reluctantly admit that the maulaví had failed to establish his case, and, as the two friends sat together in Ghulám's room two evenings later, they talked long and earnestly of what their future course should be. Ghulám had brought with him from Dhánpur, not only his Bible, but also a Bengali translation of the Qur'án, and these he now produced for the inspection of his friend. Emárat was eager to inspect the latter, but Ghulám invited his attention, first of all, to the Injíl, and especially to a number of passages which had forced themselves upon his attention during his recent study of that book. First of all he showed his friend the passages which had so impressed him on the night of his departure from Dhánpur.

'See here' he said, as he opened the Scripture 'this book, which has now been vindicated as the uncorrupted word of God, clearly states that the Prophet 'Isá was ordained by God to be the Saviour of the world. Moreover I find that God Himself gave the same Prophet the title 'Son of God', and that it was

not an impious creation of the Christians as some of our maulavís teach. Then, too, I find that the Prophet 'Isá announced, over and over again, in the clearest language, that He had been sent into the world to save men from their sins. So long as the integrity of the text of the Injíl was in doubt, I could not, of course, accept all these statements as true, but now that I know the Injíl is the same to-day as it was in the time of the Prophet Muḥammad, I can no longer dare to disregard those claims. For example, look here,' he continued, as he opened the Injíl at the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel by John, 'in this verse the Prophet 'Isá says clearly; 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one cometh unto the Father, but by me'. How, then, dare we any longer close our eyes to such claims, which exclude Muḥammad and every other prophet from exercising the functions of Saviour; indeed, so far as I can see, no other prophet has ever made such claims. Where, for example, does Muḥammad, or any one else, make such claims as are involved in these words of the Lord Jesus; 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' I have not yet read the Qur'án right through from beginning to end, but I must confess that, so far as I have gone, the Prophet Muḥammad never claims for himself the power to save sinners; on the contrary, I have already found several passages, such as Súratu'l Mu'min (xl) 57, in which he is commanded to ask pardon for his sins. Again it is clear to me that there are several mistakes in the Qur'án, and these have greatly puzzled me. For example, Manlaví Ibráhím quoted a passage from the Qur'án the other day which, he said, meant that the

Prophet 'Isá did not die on the cross, but was taken up alive into heaven. But the Injíl states clearly, not once, but over and over again, that He did die, and afterwards rose again from the dead. I must confess that the latter seems to me to be the more probable, even if we were not sure of the inerrancy of the Injíl, because I find that the Taurát and Zabúr, contain several prophecies of the death of the Messiah. It is certain that those prophecies were not inserted by wicked Christians in order to bolster up a pretended death of Christ, because those books are, and always have been, in the hands of the Jews, who do not believe on the Prophet 'Isá; and yet those prophecies are found in their copies of the Taurát and Zabúr, just as they are found in the copies in the hands of Christians. I remember, moreover, that one day when the missionary was speaking to me on this matter, he told me that the death of Christ on the cross was clearly mentioned in Roman history, that is in the history of those times written by men who were not Christians, and who had no object whatever in asserting what was not true. Besides, I cannot get out of my head the words of the munshi about sacrifice and atonement. He, one night, showed me very clearly that the animal sacrifices of the Taurát were simply types of the great sacrifice for the sins of the world which was to be made by the Messiah. To tell the truth, I never could understand the meaning or the value of our animal sacrifices; for it never seemed reasonable to me that the blood of a cow or a goat should take away our sins. Man is of more value than a cow, and you might as well expect to satisfy a rupee debt by payment of a pice as expect the debt of a man's sins to be paid by the blood of an

inferior animal. The case is quite altered, however, when a great Prophet, whom the Injíl calls the 'Son of God', and whom the Qur'án calls the 'Word of God' and 'Spirit of God', gives his sinless life as an atonement for sin. Indeed, I one day noticed, when I was reading the Injíl, that the Prophet 'Isá distinctly asserted that he had come into the world in order to make an atonement for the sins of men. Here is the passage in the twentieth chapter of Matthew's Gospel, 'Even as the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.' I have noticed many other passages in the Injíl which show clearly that the atoning death of the Prophet 'Isá on the cross is the one means of salvation for sinful men, and I have no longer any doubt that Jesus Christ is, as the Injíl so clearly states, the only Saviour of the world. I dare no longer hide this belief, for what are the fleeting pleasures of the world compared with the great gift of eternal life! and I intend, before returning to Dhánpur to acquaint my father with my decision to become a Christian.'

There was silence for a moment, and then Emárat, with a voice that shook with emotion, turned to his friend, Ghulám and said: 'Have you counted the cost? Think what your baptism will mean. You will not only be disgraced, but disinherited as well, and all your bright prospects will be ruined. Can't you be a Christian in your heart, and remain outwardly at least, a Muslim? I cannot ask you to do more than that, for I, too, am beginning to think Christianity must be true; but I am far from taking such a decisive step as baptism. My advice to you is to conceal your real faith for the

present. Complete your education first, and, then, when your father dies—and remember that he is no longer young—and you inherit his wealth, it will be easy for you to embrace Christianity.'

'I have already counted the cost', replied the young student, 'I counted it last night in my room, and this Bible helped me to a decision, for this is what God said to me through its pages, "What shall a man be profited if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his life? or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?". As I pondered over these words of the Prophet 'Isá I met another verse which read, "Seek ye first his (God's) kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you;" then, as if these two passages of the Injíl were not enough, I met, as I turned over its pages this solemn warning of the Lord Jesus Christ, "Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven; but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." No, Emárat, I dare not do as you say. Suppose I should not live to complete my education or to inherit my father's wealth! Death is no respecter of persons, and, only the other day, one of the brightest students in my class in Dhánpur was suddenly taken ill with cholera, and died within four hours. Who knows that it will not be my turn next! Besides, when I think of what the Prophet 'Isá suffered for me upon the cross, I would be ungrateful indeed, and unworthy of His love, did I refuse to suffer the loss of earthly goods for His sake. No, dear friend, I have counted the cost, and I believe God will give me grace to bear

with patience whatever trials and afflictions may come to me.'

'Well Ghulám', returned his friend, 'I can say no more. You know as well as I what awaits you if you announce yourself a Christian. I could almost wish myself with you in this matter, but I daren't. I have not enough of the martyr spirit, even if I were quite sure that Islám were false and Christianity true, to enable me to take such a stand; but if ever you need help in the difficulties which are bound to meet you, remember that you can always rely upon your chum Emárat.'

'Thanks, dear friend, for your promise of help,' replied the student, 'but my trust is in God. I have read many pages of the holy Injíl since I saw you last, and from that divine book I have learned much of His promises of grace to help in time of need. I am sure He will not fail me, and I would rather have poverty and persecution with Him, aye and death itself, if such be the cost of obedience, than all the honour and riches this world can bestow, if it must be purchased at the cost of alienation from Him. Why! only this morning I came across a verse in the Injíl which seemed peculiarly suited to my case. It was this: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." So, like the Prophet Moses, who chose to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, and who refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter for the same reason, I take my stand on God's holy word, the Injíl, and by His grace and help shall continue to guide my life by what is revealed there.'

These words of Ghulám, uttered with great deliberation and earnestness, made a deep impression upon

Emárat, who soon after rose and took his departure, taking with him, when he left, the copy of the Bengali Qur'án which Ghulám had lent him.

CHAPTER IX

GHULÁM'S CONFESSION

ON the morning following the events narrated in our last chapter, Ghulám was sitting in his room reading the Bible, when the door suddenly opened, and his father entered. There was no time, even had the youth so desired, to secrete the book which lay open before him, and his father's gaze was at once attracted to the well-bound volume. 'What have you here Ghulám?' he asked, as he took up the Book; and, then, as his eye caught the title 'Holy Bible' in bright gold lettering, he turned to the youth with a frown and demanded an explanation. Ismá'il Jabbár's knowledge of English was most elementary, but he knew enough to understand the meaning of the words he had just read, and he seemed to feel intuitively that he had at last discovered the reason of the strange reticence, which, for weeks past, had marked the demeanour of his son. 'What is this?' he cried again in a tone which demanded an answer, and, as he spoke, the infuriated father stepped forward and laid his hand heavily on Ghulám's shoulder.

The latter had risen at his father's entrance, and now stood facing him with respectful attention. As Ismá'il Jabbár repeated his question for the second time, the youth, with one quick, unspoken prayer to God for help, thus replied: 'This, father, is a copy of the holy Bible which I procured when at Dhánpur. There are

many things concerning religion of which I am ignorant, and, as the noble Qur'án teaches us to seek the help and advice of the People of the Book when in doubt concerning any matter, I visited the missionary who lives at Dhánpur, and from him procured this copy of the Christian Scriptures.'

'Christian Scriptures, forsooth!' cried the angry father, 'what need have you, a Muslím, of the Christian Scriptures! Our noble Qur'án is good enough for all true followers of the Apostle of God. Hearken to me Ghulám. I absolutely forbid you to read or touch this book again, and I order you now to promise me that you will carry out faithfully my wishes with respect to this matter.'

For a moment there was silence. For eighteen years Ghulám had loyally obeyed every behest of an indulgent father, but now, at last, the crisis in his life, which he had long foreseen, had arrived, and the time had come to choose between the will of God and the will of men. The struggle in the mind of the young student, however, was of short duration. The die had long since been cast, and Ghulám knew himself to be, not the Muslím his father had described, but a humble disciple of Jesus Christ. He had heard the call to take up his cross and follow the Christ; he had counted the cost of discipleship; he had chosen his treasure in heaven rather than on earth, and so, as he lifted his eyes to those of his father, there was in them a gleam of triumph, and as he made reply, there was in his voice a ring of settled determination.

'Father', he began, 'what you ask is impossible. Too long I have hidden my light and denied my Saviour,

but at last the time has come for me to tell you plainly that I am a Christian, and, as such, must obey God rather than you. I cannot, therefore, forsake the reading of my Bible, and I dare no longer remain a Muslim when this Bible tells me that the Prophet 'Isá is the only "way" to God the Father. I have felt for some time past that I must confess my faith, and I am glad now that the time has at length come to definitely place myself on the side of those who follow that Prophet. I count it my duty, therefore, to tell you that I intend, on my return to Dhánpur, to be baptized, and join the Christian Church.'

Ghulám's declaration of his faith in Christ, and of his intention to be baptized, fell like a bombshell into the astonished ears of the Islámabád landowner. Never before had his son addressed him in such tones, and he was staggered by the announcement which fell from the latter's lips. Rage and grief chased each other in alternate succession through his mind as the full significance of what he had just heard came home to him, and he felt humiliated to the very dust as he pictured the disgrace and contumely which would be his if his son really carried out his purpose of being baptized. Ismá'il Jabbár was not what one might call a religious man, and the claims of religion sat lightly upon him. In his own heart of hearts, it must be confessed, he cared little whether Christianity or Islám were true, but he was a man of the world, and valued the esteem and honour of his fellow men, and as President of the local Anjumán-i-Islám he exercised no little authority over the other Muslims of the locality. In his dual capacity as landlord and President of the Anjumán-

i-Islám he easily ranked first amongst the Muslims of that part of the country. The thought, therefore, that his only son, of all men, should renounce Islám and become a Christian, mortified and maddened him, whilst the sudden reversal of all his hopes concerning the future career of his son and heir cast him into the depths of despair.

'Do you know sir,' he cried, 'what it means to be baptized? You scarcely have weighed the consequences of such a mad act; for the day you leave my home and become a Christian, that day you cease to be my son.'

'Yes father, I have counted the cost,' the young man replied, 'and I am willing to pay the price so that I might gain eternal life; for what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul? I am ready, father, to obey you in everything else, and it gives me greater pain than you think to have to speak to you thus, but in matters of religion the claims of God come first, and I dare not act differently.'

'You need sir,' cried the angry father, 'to be reminded that you are my son, and if you are not wise enough to follow the advice of your seniors in matters which you do not understand, then I must resort to other measures to enforce my authority and bring you to your senses. Understand, therefore, that you do not leave this room until you have given me your promise neither to touch the Bible again nor to have any further dealings with Christians. In the meantime you will get but one meal a day, and be permitted to speak to no one,' and, so saying, Ismá'il Jabbár strode from the room, and locked the door behind him.

As the sound of his father's retreating footsteps died away Ghulám threw himself upon his knees and poured out his heart to God in prayer for grace and strength to stand firm under the trials which awaited him; and he rose calmed and strengthened with the assurance that the Master whose name he had just confessed was an unseen Companion in his lonely prison. The day passed slowly away, and as the shadows of evening drew near his quick ears detected his father's footsteps outside the door, and a moment later the latter was standing before him.

'Well Ghulám,' the father began: 'I hope that further consideration has led you to see the folly of disobeying my commands.'

'Father, I cannot alter my decision to be a Christian,' the lad replied. 'I know that the Bible is the word of God, neither corrupted nor abrogated, and in that book I find that the Prophet 'Isá is the God-appointed Saviour of men. You may imprison me; you may starve me; aye, you may kill me, but I cannot deny the Lord who died for me.' 'Then the consequences of your mad folly be upon your own head,' shrieked the now infuriated father. 'I must adopt more extreme measures to teach you obedience', and so saying, he opened the door, and beckoned to a group of male servants who stood waiting outside with heavy bamboo sticks in their hands. At a further sign from Ismá'il Jabbár these men now fell upon the defenceless Ghulám, and belaboured him so unmercifully that the lad at length fell senseless at his father's feet.

When Ghulám returned to consciousness he found himself lying alone upon his bed, with the room bathed in light from the full moon which shone through the

barred windows. His body was bruised and swollen, and he passed a sleepless night tortured with pain. The morning brought some measure of relief, for his mother was permitted to visit him, and she bathed his wounds and gave him some nourishing food. The day passed slowly away, and as Ghulám lay upon his bed he had ample leisure to review the events of the past few hours. His Bible had been taken from him, but many a familiar passage came back to him bringing its message of comfort and peace, and he found deep consolation in repeating to himself the words of Christ: 'Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' 'Every one that hath left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundred fold, and shall inherit eternal life.'

The following day found Ghulám almost recovered from the effects of his beating, though his body remained stiff and sore. He was still kept a close prisoner, but at noon his father, accompanied by Maulaví Ibrá'hím 'Alí, entered the room. The latter at once accosted Ghulám, and expressed his surprise and grief at the news of his threatened apostasy. 'How can you so dishonour your aged father,' he continued, 'as to even think of renouncing the glorious religion of Islám. Would you bring down the grey hairs of your father in sorrow to the grave, and for ever cover your family name with shame and obloquy? Think, too, of your own loss! for if you become a Christian you will be disinherited and cast out upon a heartless world without a pice. Think what bright prospects you

will forfeit! I know for a certainty that your father contemplated, later on, sending you to England that you might enter the civil service of this country. All this, and much more, you will lose if you become a Christian—and for what? You know as well as I do that poverty and disgrace await you if you are baptized, and so I plead with you for the sake of your aged father, and I plead with you for your own sake to give up this foolish infatuation, and relieve the mind of your anxious parents.'

There was no trace of indecision or of fear in the voice of Ghulām as he replied to the maulavī's words. He had found it difficult to speak plainly to his father, but to this man, who, a few days before, had so signally failed to justify his rejection of the Taurāt and Injīl, he found it easy to speak. Indeed it seemed as if, in that supreme moment, he had been given special power from on high, for he felt a strange sense of exaltation as he looked into the face of his old teacher.

'Maulavī Sāhib,' he began, 'I am surprised that you, a religious teacher, should at such a time as this have nothing better to urge than worldly considerations in order to induce me to give up Christianity. Surely in such a matter as this questions of worldly gain or loss should not count. I, for one, care not what the world may bring to me of joy or of sorrow, of gain or of loss. What I do care for is that I may be found doing the will of God before whom I shall one day be judged. That will I believe to be found in following the Prophet 'Isā whom God has ordained as the Saviour of men; and until I am shown that I am wrong in following Him, no considerations such as you have advanced can

have any weight with me. I have read the Injīl, and I know that the Prophet 'Isā is the sinless Prophet who gave his life as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. God forbid, then, that I should endanger my salvation by denying Him.'

'Well,' retorted the maulavī, 'I am not going to argue with you as to the sinlessness of the Prophet 'Isā, upon whom be the peace and blessing of God, or even as to His alleged death upon the cross; for what do these things matter? The Prophet 'Isā Himself foretold the advent of Muḥammad, the seal of the Prophets, so that even if I grant you all you have said, our noble Prophet is still the last great Prophet, and, as such, is to be obeyed and followed.'

'That I cannot believe,' answered the student, 'for I raised the same objection to a Christian preacher in Dhānpur many days ago, and he showed me very clearly that the Prophet 'Isā never mentioned the coming of a prophet named Muḥammad, though He, on one occasion, warned His followers against false prophets—who should arise after Him. On the contrary, He said: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall never pass away", thus indicating that Christianity should never be abrogated or superseded. Besides, I cannot see what gain it would be to the world even if we did admit Muḥammad as the last Prophet. He himself never claimed to be a saviour from sin, but, on the contrary, often asked pardon for his own sins, so that there is nothing to be gained by following him even if, as you allege, he were a Prophet'.

The fearless words of Ghulām exasperated the maulavī almost beyond endurance; for the thought that a pupil of

his should address him thus was more than he could tolerate, and, without replying to what had just been spoken, he proceeded to pour out upon Ghulám a perfect torrent of abuse. Finally, turning to the boy's father, he said: 'The sooner, sir, you drive this infidel out of your house the better. His mind has been so utterly corrupted by these Christian missionaries that it is useless to hope for repentance from him. Who knows, but that, if he stays here longer, he may lead others astray.' So saying, the angry Muslim strode out of the room.

As Ghulám stood alone before his father he knew instinctively that a great crisis had arrived in his life, and he prepared himself to hear the sentence which would for ever cut him off from all this world held dear. There was no sign of pity in the stern face of Ismá'il Jabbár as he spoke the fateful words. Slowly and deliberately the words fell which proclaimed Ghulám a stranger in his own home, and two minutes later he found himself outside his father's gateway disinherited and disowned, a derision and a byword in the village where he had been born. Yet Ghulám's faith did not waver. Deep down in his own heart the still, small voice of an approving conscience bade him take courage, and he knew that the Master whom he had chosen was by his side.

CHAPTER X

EMÁRAT'S CONVERSION

THE reader will remember that when Emárat took his leave of Ghulám on the evening preceding the events narrated in the last chapter, he took with him a copy of a Bengali translation of the Qur'án which Ghulám had lent him. So overjoyed was the young merchant at the opportunity which now came to him to learn something of the contents of the Qur'án that he sat late into the night poring over its pages. He was both interested and pleased, as he read the first short chapter, to learn the meaning of the prayer which he, parrot-like, had so often uttered. The beauty of the simple prayer impressed him, but he wondered, as he read, how men could call the passage a revelation from God. To him it seemed the sincere prayer of a man seeking guidance and help, and as he read the brief notes at the foot of the page, he was confirmed in his opinion by the fact that Ibn Mas'úd, one of the Companions of the Prophet, and a Qur'án reader (Qárí), had rejected Súratu'l-Fátiha as not being a part of the Qur'án sent down from heaven. Then he turned to Súratu'l-Baqara (ii), but had not proceeded far in his reading before he met a passage (verse thirty-two) which made him rub his eyes with astonishment, and he looked a second time before he could convince himself that the words he saw

were really a part of the Qur'án. The words that so astonished Emárat were these, 'And when we said to the angels, "Bow down and worship Adam", then worshipped they all, save Iblis.' The youth was honestly puzzled, for he could not understand how a book which taught so strongly the unity of God, and the duty of worshipping Him alone, should distinctly state that, in heaven, the angels were commanded to worship Adam; and he could not help wondering how such a book could really be a revelation from God. Emárat, however, did not spend much time over this difficult passage, but with a mind anxious and perplexed proceeded to finish the chapter.

The next passage which arrested his attention was *Súratu'l-Baqara* (ii) 45 'Fear ye the day when soul shall not satisfy for soul at all, nor shall any intercession be accepted from them,' and, as he read, he said to himself, If this verse be true, then Muḥammad cannot be an intercessor at the day of judgement, for it distinctly states that, on that day, no intercession will be accepted. Then, thoroughly perplexed, the youth read on until he came to the words of the Qur'án regarding the observation of the fast, 'Eat and drink until ye can discern a white thread from a black thread by the day-break; then fast strictly until night.' [*Súratu'l-Baqara* (ii) 183], and as he turned to the notes at the foot of the page he was reminded of the existence of countries like Iceland and Greenland where the summer's day is nearly six months long, and where, therefore, it would be manifestly impossible for men to keep the Muslim fast. From this passage it is clear, cogitated the youth, that either the Qur'án is not from God, or else Islám

cannot be a religion intended for all the world, for God would never command men to do that which is impossible.

Then Emárat came to passages inciting the Muslims to 'fight against the infidels', and, still later on, he met the passage in which it is prescribed that there be 'no compulsion in religion' [*Súratu 'Alī 'Imrān* (iii) 79]. Emárat knew that the maulavis explained such contradictory passages of the Qur'án by the doctrine of abrogation, but, somehow, that explanation failed to satisfy his mind, and he continued his study assailed by doubts as to the divine origin of the book he was reading.

The youth was delighted with the words, 'The east and the west are God's, He guideth whom He will into the right path' [*Súratu'l-Baqara* (ii) 136], for it seemed fitting that the Creator of all the earth should be omnipresent, but his joy was turned into dismay when, later on, he read, 'Turn, then, thy face towards the sacred mosque, and wherever ye be turn your faces towards that part' (verse 139), and he wondered how the God whose face was everywhere should now be found only at Mecca; and at length, weary and distressed, he laid down the book and fell asleep.

Two days later Emárat was suddenly accosted by his friend Ghulám. The latter drew his arm in his, and led him away to a quiet spot on the river bank where he related to him all the events which had transpired since their last meeting. As Ghulám spoke of his beating, and showed his friend the marks of the blows upon his arms and shoulders the young merchant's eyes blazed with anger. 'This,' said he, 'decides me, to become a Christian too. So long I have hesitated, partly from

fear, partly because I hoped that, somehow, we might be found wrong in our judgements. But what I have read in the Qur'án, and what I have seen of the maulavi's treatment of you, has decided me that I cannot longer remain in a religion which substitutes force for argument, and would compel men against their convictions to follow Muḥammad. To tell the truth, the missionary's words at the meeting the other day practically decided me; for I can see clearly now that the Injíl is the uncorrupted word of God, and, as such, I dare not reject its teachings.'

'Yes, I am persuaded,' rejoined Ghulám, 'that, if Muslím's would study this matter without prejudice, and would examine the Qur'án and the great commentaries on it, instead of relying upon hearsay, they would be compelled to believe in and obey the Taurát and Injíl. And when they do that they cannot stop short of becoming Christians, for the teaching of the Injíl is clear that only in the Prophet 'Isá is there salvation. As for me, my course is clear, and I purpose, God willing, to spend my life in seeking to bring my Muslím fellow-countrymen to a knowledge of the truth'.

'And as for me,' replied Emárat, 'I shall at once inform my father of my purpose to become a Christian. If, like you, I am turned out of my home, I will seek my fortunes elsewhere. I have hands to work, and do not fear that, with God on my side, I shall prosper.' Then the two friends knelt together, and lifted up their hearts in thanksgiving to God who had led them to peace and safety.

Our story is ended. Ghulám returned to Dhánpur, where he was baptized by the missionary, Mr. Williams.

He then, with the latter's help, continued his studies until he passed the matriculation examination of the Calcutta University a few weeks later. He then entered the famous Serampur College for theological training, and, in due time, came forth equipped for his life's work. He is now an earnest preacher of the Gospel, and, with the munshí's daughter Amíran as a wife, is happily settled in a town some distance south of Dhánpur.

Ghulám's father is still a Muslím, but he has long since repented of that cruel beating, and Ghulám is now a welcome visitor at his old home. The latter is not without hope that his father will yet surrender himself to the claims of Christ, and he and Emárat, who has also been baptized, often sit together and talk of the days when they planned to convert the Christian missionary to Islám.

